

THE SMART SET

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CLEVERNESS

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"THE SMART SET" FOR JULY

One of the foremost writers of the day will contribute her most important novel to the July number. It is a story of a party of Americans touring in Spain, and is written with all that charm and distinction which readers have come to expect from the author.

"THE TRAVELING THIRDS," By Gertrude Atherton

Mrs. Atherton's novel sets a remarkably high standard, yet the short stories in the July number fully sustain the reputation which the magazine has gained for delightful fiction. Among the authors may be mentioned Harold MacGrath, Beatrix Demarest Lloyd, Ellis Parker Butler, Emma Wolf, Frederic Taber Cooper and Gilbert Frankau (son of "Frank Danby").

The essay will be from the pen of Edgar Saltus and entitled, "The Importance of Being Somebody." Verse of a high order will appear by Gelett Burgess, Frank Dempster Sherman, Theodosia Garrison, Virginia Woodward Cloud and Carolyn Wells.

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ON THE NEWPORT ROAD

By Sewell Ford

THEY were breakfasting at Cresthills.

Cresthills and breakfast! Down in Valeburg those two words were always linked with another—champagne. It was an absurd slander, to be sure. But then, the Valeburg folk did not like the folk up at Cresthills. They resented the coldly impersonal manner in which Mrs. "Billy" Redkirk glanced at them as she rode to and from the railroad station. They had heard, too, that she spoke of them as "those vulgar villagers." So the fiction that everyone at Cresthills drank champagne at breakfast was gleefully circulated.

They were doing nothing of the sort, of course. Mr. William Redkirk, with morning paper opened to the sporting page and propped against the toast-rack, was dividing his attention between that and his coffee-cup. Mrs. "Billy" was opening letters with a fruit-knife. Aunt Emily was drinking cocoa. She knew it made her stouter, but she liked it. Barbara was sipping hot milk because—well, it is not best to try to account for Barbara. Mrs. "Billy" couldn't and Mrs. "Billy" was her mother.

At any rate, there was no champagne. Yet they would not have believed this down at Valeburg. The folk there knew that anyone who could squander money as Mrs. "Billy" squandered it, *must* drink champagne, not only at breakfast, but at luncheon and dinner and most likely in the middle of the night. Look at what she had done with Cresthills!

It was quite true. Mrs. "Billy" had done things to Cresthills, or caused

them to be done. She began doing them soon after old Jeremiah Redkirk, with a cynical smile on his rugged face, released his grip on the millions he had piled up and passed on to make his last accounting.

That had been four years ago. Since then Mrs. "Billy" had turned an old-fashioned, box-built country mansion, with a cupola and much fancy jig-saw work under the eaves, into an imposing structure which had a Colonial front, a porte-cochère and huge Dutch chimneys. She had transformed twenty acres of worn-out Connecticut farm-land into a veritable park, surrounded her domain with a bristly topped iron fence of Florentine design, and christened the result Cresthills. Then she had turned her eyes toward Newport and begun her campaign.

"Why not?" she had demanded of Aunt Emily. "It isn't as if we had just made our money, nor as if we got it from patent medicines, nor bottled beer, nor a breakfast food. And we don't come from Chicago. So why not?"

Her sister-in-law did not trouble herself to reply. She merely gazed at Mrs. "Billy" and retained her sleek, bovine complacency.

Mr. William Redkirk was not consulted. He never was. In family affairs he did not even play a thinking part. Mrs. "Billy" did that for him, too, and he was content. Vaguely he was conscious of being towed in the wake of Mrs. "Billy" from the placid waters of comfortable obscurity into the more troubled channels of an uneasy life; a life where it mattered

not only what you did and where you went, but how you did it, who went with you and who saw you there.

It was all very complex, but Billy submitted unprotestingly so long as he could occasionally escape to enjoy the company of men who could talk intelligently about the light-weight championship and how the horses were running. Besides, Mrs. "Billy" made matters comparatively easy by deciding that the role of country gentleman was best for him. With only a few hints he dressed the part to perfection.

Chiefly on this account Mrs. "Billy" conducted her campaign from Cresthills, keeping the new city house closed except for two or three winter months, when it was absolutely necessary to be seen in town. Cresthills, too, was chosen as the arena for her master-stroke.

It was to be a house-party, an English house-party, as English as she could make it, considering the limitations of her own experience and the un-English environment of Cresthills. But it must be English, for was not Mr. Lawrence Cheltingham to be one of the guests?

The discovery, capture and contribution of Mr. Cheltingham to Mrs. "Billy's" visiting list had been the one notable achievement in her husband's not altogether brilliant social career.

"Cheltingham! Why, that sounds good," she had mused at first mention of the name. "It sounds English."

"Ye-e-es, he is English," admitted Billy a little reluctantly.

Five minutes later Mrs. "Billy" had appeared from the library with the "Peerage" under her arm.

"There's a Cheltingham who's an earl?" she said, looking doubtfully at her husband.

"Oh, yes; that's his uncle. But Larry's a bang-up polo player, for all that. He's one of the Hurlingham champions, you know. Came over here to try for the——"

"And his uncle is an earl! Billy"—there was almost admiration in her

glance—"how did you ever manage it?"

"Manage! There wasn't any managing about it. He was in our crowd at the Suburban Handicap. Mighty nice chap, too."

Mrs. "Billy" also elicited the information that Mr. Cheltingham was young, unmarried, "well put up," and that he was to spend the summer on this side of the ocean.

"Then you must bring him out," declared Mrs. "Billy." "Do you suppose you can?"

"Why can't I? We have a billiard tie to play off. I'll just wire him to run up tomorrow."

It was after Mrs. "Billy" had seen him, heard her husband confidently call him "Larry," had diplomatically dragged from her guest an admission that his uncle was, in very truth, an earl, that she began to plan her house-party and to long for Barbara's return.

"Mr. Lawrence Cheltingham, nephew of an earl." In secret Mrs. "Billy" whispered these words to herself, as if rehearsing them. At such moments Newport did not seem at all remote to the soaring soul of Mrs. "Billy." She saw its gates—the massive, iron-studded, cruelly spiked gates, which Newport does not possess, of course, but which it really should, you know—saw them swing grudgingly open on creaking hinges, saw Mr. Lawrence Cheltingham stalk boldly in with Barbara on his arm, saw herself close behind with Billy in tow, urging him to slip in quickly before the gates clanged shut.

All of this airy vision depended upon two persons, Barbara and Lawrence Cheltingham, who—and now see how daring an architect of fate Mrs. "Billy" could be—who had never met. But they should meet. Barbara's intricate education was at last near an end. She was coming home to abide with them at Cresthills. The house-party should mark her entrance into that world wherein Mrs. "Billy" had so long hoped to see her take her place.

It was not to be a big affair. No more than a dozen had been bidden,

but they would make up a very select dozen, from the standpoint of Mrs. "Billy." They would be personages who could help, personages who might not care, under ordinary circumstances, to spend a week at Cresthills, but who could not resist an opportunity to meet "the nephew of an earl." Oh, Mrs. "Billy" knew what would bring them! She had baited hooks before.

To a London society magazine she was indebted for her program, basing it on a description of a house-party given by a Lady Somebody in Something - or - Othershire. True, there could be no cricket match—Mr. Cheltingham could not be expected to cricket all by himself—nor polo. But there should be archery, and lawn bowls and a gymkhana tournament. Lady Somebody's guests had indulged in all these things.

"Why not croquet and tiddledewinks and authors, or aren't they stupid enough?" Billy Redkirk had ventured in mild scorn.

But Mrs. "Billy" paid no heed. She just looked at him disapprovingly, and sighed. Billy would be more or less of a handicap. But then, there would be Barbara. There were many husbands such as Billy, or worse, but how many women who had stormed those forbidding gates could summon the aid of such a daughter as Barbara?

That Barbara might fail her did not occur to Mrs. "Billy" until after the airy structure of plans and hopes was fully completed. The incident of the garden frocks brought enlightenment. There were four of these frocks, filmy creations in pastel shades. Mrs. "Billy" had ordered them for Barbara as a pleasing surprise. Barbara viewed them with obvious dismay.

"And *picture hats*, mother!" Barbara's delicately etched eyebrows lifted a little.

"Would you prefer sunbonnets?"

But Barbara ignored the sarcasm. "Really, it is very nice of you, mother, but I wish you hadn't. I am not going on exhibition, am I? I thought your

guests were all to be middle-aged, married people?"

"Mr. Cheltingham is neither middle-aged nor married."

"Mr. Cheltingham! Who is he?"

"He is English. His uncle is an earl." Try as she might, Mrs. "Billy" could not suppress the note of triumph.

"Ah, indeed!" Barbara shot a keen glance at her mother. "So that explains the pastel costumes and the picture hats?"

"It explains nothing of the sort, Barbara."

Barbara, however, went serenely on. "Mr. Cheltingham's uncle is an earl, and mummer dear has hopes, has she? Well, mummer dear needn't. I dislike Englishmen. As for nephews of earls, I despise them."

Out of the abrupt wreck of her shattered air-castle Mrs. "Billy" smiled coldly on her daughter. So Barbara still had a temper of her own? This, at least, was a Barbara she could understand. It was the calm, self-contained, silent Barbara that had puzzled her.

"Another college whim, Barbara?"

"It is not a whim. I have the best of reasons for not liking Englishmen."

"They must be interesting, I am sure; based on your wide experience, of course?"

"Exactly; on a personal experience."

"Ah!" Mrs. "Billy" prepared her ears for a confidential recital. It had been long since Barbara had so favored her.

"It was not a pleasant experience. Some day I will tell you about it."

"Why not now, Barbara?" urged Mrs. "Billy."

"I had rather not. Is it not enough to know that I dislike Englishmen?"

"Perhaps you will find Mr. Cheltingham an exception."

"It is more probable that I shall despise him thoroughly."

"Very well," said Mrs. "Billy," apparently resigned to this ultimatum. "But how shall we prevent his coming? He's been asked, you know."

"Oh, let him come. I shall manage him. He will not come again. And

there are to be no more hopes, you know, mother."

It sounded ominous, yet Mrs. "Billy" smiled. After all, it was nothing more than another of Barbara's whims. In a few days, in a week, at least, Mrs. "Billy" thought that she should know this Barbara of hers.

But now, glancing across the breakfast-table at the regal young person who sipped hot milk and nibbled at well-browned toast, she realized that she did not know Barbara at all. She doubted if she ever would. It was not a comforting reflection. She felt rather silly over finding herself in such an absurd position. And the house-party and the coming of Mr. Cheltingham were events of tomorrow.

II

THE noon train of the next day brought the Dickinsons, the Thayer-Braytons, and a few others. The 3.15 added the Monkses and the Ringmont contingent. Between trains came the Ivingses in their big red touring-car. On the six-o'clock express came Mr. Lawrence Cheltingham. As he drove up in the station wagonette he was chatting in a friendly way with the Redkirk coachman. He grinned broadly when stout Mrs. Mortimer Monks murmured her appreciation "at meeting your grace."

Mr. William Redkirk, who had been none too much at his ease in playing host to the rather stiff-necked gentlemen among his wife's guests, greeted Cheltingham with hearty welcome. To Mrs. Monks's horror he slapped him on the back.

"I've been waiting for you, Larry!" he exclaimed. "Come on down to the billiard-room and we'll handle the cues until it's time to dress for——"

A glance from Mrs. "Billy" cut him short.

"Well, what's the matter?" he asked meekly.

"Will not the billiards keep until

after dinner, dear? I want you to find Barbara now and bring her here."

Mr. Cheltingham favored his host with a grimace. "Run along now, and be good," he advised. Then, to Mrs. "Billy": "So the young lady has come home from school, has she? That's good. I'm a great hand at getting on well with little girls."

"Little girls!" exclaimed Mrs. "Billy." Then she remembered that he could have no idea of Barbara. "You will find her rather a good-sized girl, I think."

"Oh, the bigger the better. I've a strong liking for girls, from two feet up to six, from six years up to sixty. I don't like 'em over six feet tall, though, and I lose interest in them when they're older than sixty."

Talk of this kind seemed to be no more effort to Larry Cheltingham than breathing. He had a habit of assuming a slight brogue, of which he was rather proud. "I get it from my grandmother, who was an O'Rourke," he was fond of explaining. "It's all she did leave me, and it's the only legacy I never spent."

Mrs. "Billy" listened to him smilingly.

"Frankly, I do not expect you to get on well with Barbara, Mr. Cheltingham. She tells me that she dislikes Englishmen."

"She's been studying about the Revolution. It's Irish I'll be to her. I can do it without half trying, and——" Cheltingham left the sentence tailless.

Coming toward them was Billy Redkirk, accompanied by a vision in delicate French grays. Even Mrs. "Billy" caught her breath and experienced a little shiver of gratified surprise. It was the first time she had seen Barbara in anything save severe black or plain white.

"Cleopatra, Venus and Helen of Troy!" said Cheltingham under his breath. "And who might this be, Mrs. Redkirk?"

"It's—it's Barbara," she said, a little chokingly. Even when she had planned those gowns, had pictured to herself how Barbara would look in them, she

had wholly failed to anticipate such harmony of form and color.

"Is it, now! And here I was expecting a miss with her skirts above her boot-tops! Saints defend me, Mrs. Redkirk, but I shall be telling her what a beauty she is the minute I open my mouth! Have I your leave for that?"

"You must reckon with Barbara first," laughed Mrs. "Billy." "I can see difficulties ahead for you."

Then Barbara arrived. As a pilgrim before a shrine bowed Mr. Cheltingham. As a rose nodding haughtily on its stem Barbara acknowledged the salaam.

"That's my very best bow, Miss Redkirk," said Cheltingham, "but it does my intentions poor justice. Imagine me on my knees."

At his first words she started. The delicate pink of her cheeks and ears deepened. She shut her hands tightly, and into her calm eyes came an odd expression.

"I shall imagine nothing of the sort, Mr. Cheltingham; it would be very embarrassing."

"On one knee, then."

"That custom belongs to obsolete chivalry. In this age men kneel only to the dollar."

"Then I am born a century too late, Mrs. Redkirk"—here he turned to Mrs. "Billy"—"I am going to carry your daughter off out of your hearing and tell how you deceived me about her. Will you come, Miss Redkirk?" and he extended an inviting hand to Barbara.

"Yes," said Barbara, ignoring the proffered hand, "I believe I will."

"What a talker Larry is!" observed Billy Redkirk, looking after them as they walked toward the imitation Italian garden.

"It seems that our Barbara has a tongue, too," commented Mrs. "Billy."

Lawrence Cheltingham was making the same discovery. He was being talked to in a manner that was as surprising to him as it was disturbing. No sooner had Barbara heard his voice than she decided to do it. It was the

only logical course. In justice to herself and in fairness to him he must be told. She went about the telling in no indirect fashion.

"Please do not make any more galling speeches, Mr. Cheltingham," she began. "It is useless. I have the advantage of knowing your real motive for saying such things to me."

"Then you've read my thoughts?"

"Nothing so subtle as that. But once I was compelled to listen while you made an astonishing revelation."

"Sounds mysterious," suggested Cheltingham.

"It isn't in the least. Do you recall being in a dining-car on the New York limited from Boston early in June?"

"I was there," he admitted. "Were you, too?"

"At the next table. I remember you by your voice. You were talking to a friend—a fellow-Englishman, I judged."

"Right! That would be Tivvy Winthrop. We'd been playing a match down at Beverly Farms."

"But you were not talking of polo. I couldn't help overhearing. The subject was the American girl."

"Was it, now? I'll wager Tivvy started that talk. He has presumption enough to think he could do the subject justice. It's a thing I'd never attempt single-handed. The girls of America! Of course, we Britishers talk about them, unless we're tongue-tied."

Barbara had stopped by a carved marble seat. Her calm eyes were taking stock of Cheltingham. She saw a well-groomed, compactly built man of about her own height, which was five feet eight. His eyes were blue-gray and audacious. His reddish brown hair was inclined to curl. So were his mouth corners. She decided that he was either very brazen or very forgetful. She chose to assume the latter.

"Pardon me, but you must remember that I overheard your conversation."

Cheltingham could misunderstand neither the look nor the tone, yet he appeared perplexed.

"We—I—that is, there was nothing

offensive, I hope? It was not meant to be, I'm sure." This was what he said to her. Of himself he demanded vainly, "What the deuce did we say?"

"Whether it was offensive or inoffensive, I shall not presume to judge. But it has made a lasting impression on my mind. I thought that you ought to know this. It may help us to understand each other better during the next few days."

Cheltingham looked slightly bewildered.

"I can't for the life of me think what we could have said," he declared. "It couldn't have been anything that wasn't nice, for Tivvy's almost a prig about that sort of thing."

"It was, I suppose, something which any gentleman would feel privileged to say anywhere."

"Thank heaven! For a minute I was afraid I might have cursed the porter, they're such highway robbers! But now tell me what we *did* say before my red hair turns gray with the worry of it."

Barbara sniffed scornfully. "I will. You were discussing the necessity of marrying an American girl, a rich one. Your friend suggested that it was the only certain way to escape working for a living. You agreed with him. You confided to him, and to half the car besides, that you had your eye on two or three likely ones. Am I right, Mr. Cheltingham?"

He groaned. "We said it, bad luck to us, every word of it!"

Barbara smiled loftily. "It may be unnecessary for me to ask that, in the event of my name being reckoned among the 'likely ones,' you strike it from the list."

"But, my dear young lady, we——"

"I think I understand your attitude," she interrupted. "It is not an unusual one. I believe I do not care to say anything more on the subject."

At least, that was all she did say, for she turned very quickly and quitted the garden, leaving Cheltingham in a most unenviable frame of mind and gazing blankly at the carved marble seat.

"And she believes we meant it!" he ejaculated at last. "Tivvy, Tivvy, may the devil take you! You've no more sense of humor than a Hottentot, and yet you will joke in public. I'm in for it now. Here's a Lady Beautiful that makes me out with no better reputation than a stray dog in a butcher's shop. Larry, will you stand that? I will not. I'll show her ladyship that I'm really a saint who's mislaid his halo. She shall believe that if it takes me the rest of the summer."

As a beginning he filled his briar and sat down to smoke over it, revealing himself at once as a true philosopher. Reflection was needed. He must try to get a glimpse of himself as Barbara Redkirk saw him.

An heiress chaser! Mr. Cheltingham, whose uncle was an earl, chuckled. It was rather a novel view. It would have been somewhat entertaining to a score, more or less, of ambitious English mothers. Yet he had been convicted by his own words. True, when he and Tivvy had exchanged wails because of a common woe—a temporary lack of as much ready money as they could find uses for—Tivvy had been entirely facetious in his suggestion. Also, he, Cheltingham, had replied in kind.

But how was a certain magnificent young person with shell-tinted cheeks and a limited sense of proportion to be blamed for accepting such obtuse humor as fact? First she had heard him declare that he meant to marry a rich American girl. Next she found him under her own roof paying extravagant compliments to herself. Promptly she revolts. Her high-strung American spirit brushes aside conventions and—well, she lays him out, tells him exactly what she thinks of him.

And now shall he explain that it was just a bit of chaff between them, summoning Tivvy as witness for the defense? Hardly. A truth that sounds like a weak lie—and some truths can sound that way occasionally—had better be left unspoken. Nor could he confess that, while he was quite apt to express an admiration for all femi-

nine loveliness, his enthusiasm had no personal import. This, too, was a fact, but it would sound awkward, if stated. Something of the sort was necessary, however, if he was to convince this radiant young woman that he coveted neither her hand nor her fortune.

At this point Cheltingham suddenly decided that he had indulged long enough in serious thought. Life was too brief to be wasted in any such fashion. Solemn reflections might be well enough for some persons who rarely got into perplexing situations; but for himself, who was rarely free from them, it was a luxury.

"I'll just brass it out and trust to luck," said Mr. Cheltingham. Having come to this decision, he followed Barbara into the house.

III

At a house-party, American style, persons are bound to become very well acquainted with one another. There is no escaping it, for our hostesses pursue the business of entertaining with relentless vigor.

As early as noon of the second day Mrs. "Billy" knew that she had achieved many triumphs. Mrs. Thayer-Brayton had told her all about her divorce, the Dickinsons had hinted of a Florida yachting cruise, stout old Mortimer Monks had shown an embarrassing fondness for her society, and Mrs. Ivings had frankly envied her on the presence of Mr. Cheltingham, nephew of an earl. As Mrs. "Billy" viewed it, those frowning gates of Newport were about to open for her. She would have Billy engage a cottage for next season at once.

Standing under a striped marquee sun shelter, which had been stuck up on the edge of the tennis courts, she was watching her distinguished guests getting as much fun as possible out of the archery contest. Always a striking figure, now gracefully erect, her eyes brilliant with the pride of the hour, her elaborate casing of silk and lace falling in long, sweeping lines about

her, Mrs. "Billy" had almost a queenly air. One instant she charmed a guest with a gracious glance, in the next she sent a servant hurrying on some errand simply by a look. Serene, admirably poised, she was playing the part of *grande dame* to the life. With wings she might have posed for a figure of Victory.

Billy had been summoned to the house by a telephone call. He had taken Cheltingham along with him, to the satisfaction of Barbara, whom Aunt Emily was urging to try a dish of orange sherbet. The others were all out at the straw targets, counting the score, so for a moment it was a family grouping under the marquee.

This was a most fortunate arrangement, for when Billy came stalking back across the lawn he walked up to his wife and blurted out with crude savagery:

"The devil's to pay, Edith!"

The light of triumph died quickly from her eyes, and a distinctly unpleasant expression had flashed into them when she saw that close behind her husband was Cheltingham.

"Why, Billy dear, whatever is the matter?" She made a half-hearted attempt at a laugh, which ended wretchedly as she caught sight of her husband's face. It was not pleasant to look upon. It was a pasty gray in color. The eyes stared unseeingly and there were heavy bags under them. He dropped wearily into a lawn seat under the tent.

"Billy, what is it?" demanded Mrs. Redkirk, suddenly alarmed. She was both startled and vexed. Had Billy chosen this inopportune time to be ill? Miserable as he looked she could have shaken him.

"I'm afraid he's heard some bad news," suggested Cheltingham. "Looked as if he'd got it hard when he came from the telephone, so I trailed along. I was afraid he'd knock under on the way. Heart isn't strong, is it? But he'll come around all right in a minute. I'll just loosen his collar. Here, I've a brandy flask handy. Just a swallow, Redkirk. There, old man, that'll do you good."

In a very businesslike manner Mr. Cheltingham, who seemed to know just what he was about, proceeded to spur into normal action the balky blood pump of his host. He did it, too, without any fuss at all. In a moment or so Billy had found his voice again.

"Lawyers—over the 'phone—will case gone against us—claimant gets decision!" he panted laboriously. Then gathering strength for a connected sentence, and waving his hand toward the guests who were watching the ridiculous shots of Mrs. Ivings, he sputtered hoarsely: "It's all up, Edith. You might as well tell them to go home. We're beggars! Anyway, we'll be beggars tomorrow."

Mrs. "Billy" darted an agonized look at Cheltingham. That gentleman's face had turned very red, and he immediately abandoned the job of steadying Mr. Redkirk in the seat.

"I—I beg pardon," said Cheltingham quickly. "I didn't mean to intrude. I'll clear out until he comes to himself."

"Please don't," said Mrs. "Billy" promptly. "I want you to stay now and help me find out what has happened. I'm afraid there's something in it." Then, to her husband: "Billy, who was it called you?"

"Trent & Packham."

"Ah!" She drew in a quick breath as if summoning courage. They were the attorneys for the estate. "Just what was it they said, Billy?"

"I've told you. That woman's won. We're beggars. She'll turn us out of here tomorrow." He was leaning forward, his head in his hands, all his limp bulk confessing the abjectness of his craven nature.

Mrs. "Billy" regarded him with ill-concealed disgust.

"Could you get him into the house, out of sight somewhere?" she said to Cheltingham pleadingly. "I'm bitterly ashamed to ask it of you, but——"

"You needn't be. I'll do it."

"You must let me help you, mother." Barbara, rather white of face but steady-eyed and calm, had come forward.

"No, I want you to stay here and keep things going while I ring up those fool lawyers and find out for myself what has gone wrong. Don't worry, Barbara. There's probably some mistake. Don't let them suspect. Give out the prizes and see that refreshments are served. I'll be back soon. Can you do it?"

"Yes, I can do it." She said it quietly but convincingly.

In low, unhurried tones, Mrs. "Billy" gave a few orders to servants, then slipped away into the house. Aunt Emily, whose eyes and ears had been alert, followed her silently to the billiard-room, where the telephone was placed.

"Go back," ordered Mrs. "Billy" on discovering her.

Aunt Emily, her eyes keenly expectant, planted herself in a chair.

Mrs. "Billy," the receiver at her ear, waved a protesting hand. "Go back and stay with Barbara until I send for you."

Aunt Emily wagged her head stubbornly.

"Stay where you are, then," said Mrs. "Billy" wearily. "Hello! Hello! Is this Trent & Packham's?"

It was not. Somewhere off in that mysterious distance which lies behind the transmitter, a feminine voice was demanding complainingly why the lamb and green peas had not been sent up. This ceased abruptly, and a blank silence followed. Then came a mighty buzzing, a babel of sound, as if the billiard-room of Cresthills had suddenly become detached and hurled into a vast factory where worlds were being made in furious haste. There were groans and shoutings and the crash of great machines. Presently out of this hubbub a voice asked cheerfully, "Are you through?"

So it was fully a half-hour before Mrs. "Billy" was ready to face her hastily summoned family council, which had assembled in Mr. Redkirk's den, a bizarrely furnished apartment on the ground floor. Cheltingham had been prevailed upon to make one of the little group.

"I want you to tell me what I ought to do," explained Mrs. "Billy." "Besides, having heard a little, it is best for you to know exactly how matters stand." There was no hint of weakness about her firm chin, none in her clear-cut sentences; only, her eyes no longer held that look of triumph.

"If you think I can be of any help I'll be glad to stand by," said Cheltingham. "There is trouble, I take it?"

"Almost as bad as Billy said. The claimant has won. We have known of this suit, of course. It has been dragging through the courts for three years. But our lawyers always assured us that the woman was an impostor and the new will a forgery. She had known Jeremiah and he had given her more or less money, but she had no right to assume his name."

Mrs. "Billy" paused to shrug her shoulders and make a wry face.

"It's our family skeleton I'm parading now," she continued, still addressing Cheltingham. "Not that I take any pride in it. But everyone will know the story by tomorrow. The morning papers will be full of it. Mr. Trent says it can't be hushed up. Jeremiah Redkirk—Billy's father, you know—was not what you would call a proper old person. Along in his seventies, after he had been a widower for ten years, he began to sow a late crop of wild oats. We are just reaping some of the harvest. There's no saying how bad things are; the lawyers can't tell yet. They have promised to let me know later, possibly tonight."

"But just now what I want to know is how to get rid of those people out there. I can't tell them all this. I should die of shame. And I can't let them stay here and find it out tomorrow for themselves. I want to get them away before it comes out. That's all, just to get them away, so that I can breathe and think and act. Oh, I shall go mad if they stay another hour with this hanging over us. What can I do, Mr. Cheltingham? I know I have no right to ask you to help me, but I must ask someone. What can you suggest?"

Few women would have done it, of course. A good many would have sobbed, or indulged in hysterics. Some would simply have fainted. But Mrs. "Billy" was of more substantial mettle. She had courage, if not ability.

It was the moral courage back of her appeal which aroused the sympathy of Larry Cheltingham. With true British stolidness he had listened to her frank unfolding of this perplexing situation. Also there was aroused within him the Briton's instinct to rush to the aid of the weaker party.

"Let's see what can be done," he said.

It was no simple problem, even for the nephew of an earl, to solve off-hand. Here was a proud, ambitious woman, spurred on by high social aspirations. She had an elaborate home, many servants, abundant means. There was a pretentious function in full swing. Suddenly the golden stream of money which had kept the wheels turning so merrily threatens to dry up. The blight of an old scandal menaces. She must get rid of her guests before the blow falls.

As Larry Cheltingham might have expressed it, he had "knocked about a bit." He had served as subaltern under Kitchener in Egypt, he had bossed a sheep-ranch in Australia, he had prospected around Dawson City, and between times he had ridden polo ponies in many a hard-fought scrimmage. But he was no social strategist. Yet here was someone who needed help at that game. He must think. So he thrust his hands deep into his pockets, strode up and down in the centre of the little group, and tried very hard to think.

A young woman with big, expressive eyes watched him narrowly. Barbara had small faith in Mr. Cheltingham's thinking ability. Aunt Emily watched him, too, but furtively, from behind her handkerchief. She had realized that her material comforts were in danger, so she wept. William Redkirk sat in a corner, blinking sullenly, like an overgrown school-boy whom the teacher has thrashed.

Mrs. "Billy," her hands clasped tightly behind her back, stood looking out at the scene on the wide, velvety lawn. It was rather a picturesque scene. The women out there were not all tall and stately—some of them had positively plain features; but the art of the modiste had not been spared. Their gowns were striking. One or two of the men were insignificant to look at, some were far too stout to be imposing, but their names were very well-known names. One read of them as boxholders at the Opera and Horse Show, as cottagers at exclusive resorts. Yes, they were the right sort of people.

They were gathering under Mrs. "Billy's" marquee, to be served with ices by Mrs. "Billy's" deft-handed maids. An hour ago she had watched them with keen satisfaction. Now her right hand was gripping the left so tightly that a ring was cutting into her palm.

At the end of several minutes Cheltingham broke the silence by asking:

"You wouldn't mind my telling them a whopper, would you?"

"Oh, anything that will send them away quickly."

"Well, I've thought of something, but——"

"Then for heaven's sake do it, Mr. Cheltingham. Please do it! I am getting nervous by the minute."

"But you might think it rather——"

"I don't care what it is if it persuades them to go away without my having to meet them again."

"Then I'll try it on at once."

Without further parley he started on his mission.

IV

WHATEVER other qualities Cheltingham's ruse might have possessed, it had the merit of being successful—startlingly so. Also it was simple of operation, amazingly simple.

He did no more than take the arm of stout old Mortimer Monks, draw him to one side and talk for a moment in a con-

fidential manner. From the gestures of Mr. Monks an observer would gather that he had heard something most surprising. Promptly he broke away from Cheltingham and puffed ponderously back to the tent, where he whispered in the ear of Mrs. Monks. That lady dropped a sherbet glass and collapsed in a chair. Then Mr. Monks had to explain to the other ladies. The agitation spread.

In two minutes the whole party appeared to be engaged in a joint debate of the liveliest kind. As it was conducted most irregularly, all the women talking at once and the men making futile endeavors to introduce system and order, the affair promised to go on indefinitely, when the Thayer-Braytons broke away and headed directly for the carriage-drive leading to the highway.

That started the stampede. By twos and threes the others followed, casting apprehensive glances at the Cresthills mansion as they went. Mrs. Ivings quite unconsciously bore away with her a half-eaten ice, while Mr. Dickinson seemed equally unaware that, like a middle-aged and respectably draped Cupid, he carried an ornate, arrow-filled quiver slung across his back.

Traces of a grin lurked in Larry Cheltingham's mouth corners as he returned to make his report.

"For goodness' sake, Mr. Cheltingham, what did you tell them?" demanded Mrs. "Billy," meeting him at the door of the den.

"Well, it worked a little sooner than I expected," he responded, evading a direct answer. "But they're gone."

"I should think they had," assented Mrs. "Billy."

"Like a flock of scared geese. I tried to do it easy, too."

"But what *did* you say?"

"It was a whopper, Mrs. Redkirk. I told you it would be a whopper, you know."

"Yes, but what kind of a whopper?"

With some reluctance, and in his own way, Cheltingham made his explanation.

"When I was looking for gold up in

Alaska, and not finding it, I heard a yarn about two men who made a big strike. They were away off on the trail, twenty miles from Dawson, but the woods were full of prospectors, and they wanted to keep their luck quiet until they could get word to some friends. They worked a pretty slick game, too, while they were waiting. One of them goes to bed in the tent and the other stands outside. When a prospector came along the chap outside would hail him and ask if he knew anything about doctoring. He would say that his partner, back in the tent, was down with smallpox and——"

"Smallpox!" exclaimed Mrs. "Billy." "You didn't say that——"

"No, I didn't get as far as that. I merely hinted to Mr. Monks that one of the maids was ill, that I didn't know positively what the disease was, but that if it should be smallpox— Well, he didn't wait to hear any more. It wasn't a very brilliant scheme of mine, I admit, but I wanted to do something, and that——"

"It's all right, I suppose," said Mrs. "Billy" weakly. "I am grateful. I don't care what they think now. They are gone, gone!"

"But there go some more, mother. Look!"

Barbara was pointing to the window through which could be seen passing the Ivingses' big touring-car. Truly, there were some more, a dozen or fifteen. Never, perhaps, was the capacity of a tonneau taxed as was that one. Not only were all the seats filled, but the whole body was packed with passengers. Men clung to the steps. Two rode forward on the hood. The roof of the car was piled with luggage.

"Why, there's Marie! And Tapley! And the chef! And the waitresses! Mother, all the servants are there!"

This seemed a very accurate statement of the case. The Cresthills corps, reinforced by the maids of the guests, were all jammed into the big red auto, like musicians in a circus band-wagon. As the vehicle slowly took the curve before dropping down the grade of the

carriage-road those within the house could read panic in their faces. Before anyone could act the car had whirled out of sight.

"What can have happened!" exclaimed Mrs. "Billy," dazed by this new development.

"There were a couple of maids out at the marquee," suggested Cheltingham, looking rather sheepish. "I fancy they must have overheard some of the talk."

"Smallpox!" In a whisper, as if reluctant to hear her own voice say it, Mrs. "Billy" named the dread contagion.

"Wait," said Barbara. "I'm going to see if there are any left." She walked hurriedly through the vacant rooms. She called. She rang bells. Then she came back to announce, "Not one!"

This aroused Aunt Emily. "But who is to cook the meals and help me dress and do all the other things?" Sternly, accusingly she made these demands of Cheltingham.

Prompted by sheer egoism though it was, this proved to be a most enlightening query. It stripped the situation of all obscuring frills, brushed aside all uncertain, contingent consequences and stated baldly the one imminent calamity. Cresthills was servantless!

Cheltingham seemed to be afflicted with a perverted sense of humor. In some way or other he managed to view this wail of the sleek, aggrieved Aunt Emily as funny. At least, he did not repress a grin.

Mrs. "Billy," however, saw only the tragedy. She slipped despairingly down on the window-seat and hid her face in her hands. Observing this, but still unenlightened, Cheltingham turned to look inquiringly at Barbara. Then he wished he had looked elsewhere. She gave him one withering glance and then turned her back on him.

"Whew!" Cheltingham began mopping his red face. "I say, now," he continued, "I'm awfully sorry. Don't take it so hard, all of you. They'll

come back, won't they, when they find it isn't so?"

"Who is to tell them it isn't so?" demanded Barbara icily, over her shoulder.

"Why—why, I'll tell them. I'll go right away and fetch 'em back."

"And what will you tell the guests, Mr. Cheltingham?" asked Mrs. "Billy."
"No, we'll just have to let them go. I'll try to get some others from town."

"But Tapley has been with us seven years!" moaned Aunt Emily.

Unscathingly did Cheltingham denounce himself as a bungling meddler, and to no purpose. Mrs. "Billy" protested that he must not say such things. He had meant well. Anyway, he had rid the house of guests. She was thankful for that. Perhaps by tomorrow she could get a new lot of servants.

"Tomorrow!" croaked her husband.
"Tomorrow we'll be beggars."

"Don't be a baby," snapped Mrs. "Billy."

At the end of a half-hour Cheltingham desperately announced that he meant to do something. He would walk down to the village and try to find some of the servants. He would find Tapley, the butler, and a maid or two, assure them privately that no one was ill, and bring them back with him.

He had been gone but a little while when he came back, crestfallen and alone.

"Well," said Mrs. "Billy," "couldn't you find any of them?"

"I didn't have a chance. I was stood up down there at the forks of the road, by a chuckle-headed country constable with a double-barreled shotgun."

"Stood up!" cried Mrs. "Billy" incredulously.

"That's what we used to call it in Alaska. Said he'd fill me full of shot if I didn't come back. He meant it, too, blast his eyes! Had his gun all cocked."

"It's an outrage," declared Mrs. "Billy."

"Yes, I told him something of the

sort. But he wouldn't argue the point. He says we're quarantined."

Mrs. "Billy" echoed the word aghast. So did Barbara; likewise Aunt Emily.

"He was kind enough to inform me," continued Cheltingham, "that there were two bad cases of smallpox up here, that a whole crowd of our folks were now being fumigated and vaccinated in the Town Hall, and that the authorities did not propose to let any more of us escape."

"Our folks! Being fumigated in the Town Hall!" gasped Mrs. "Billy."
"Why, do you suppose he could have meant the Thayer-Braytons, the Dickinsons, and all those?"

"Fancy they are the ones—with the servants. The constable said they had rounded up two lots of refugees and that if any more came he was prepared to shoot. It's a beautiful mess I've got you into, Mrs. Redkirk. As I said before, I'm an ass, a prize ass." He said it very feelingly this time.

Mrs. "Billy" paid no heed. Before her mind was the spectacle of the distinguished Mrs. Thayer-Brayton, haughty, dignified, exclusive; of stout, irritable old Mortimer Monks; of all the other members of that select company, herded in a hall with Tapley and Marie and the other servants, and forced to undergo the indignities of needless fumigation and vaccination.

"Oh, oh, oh!" groaned Mrs. "Billy."
"They will never forgive me, never!"

The telephone bell rang at this moment.

"Please see who it is?" she asked of Cheltingham.

Having answered the call, he announced: "It's the chairman of the Board of Health. He wants to know if he shall send up a physician."

"Tell him to mind his— No, tell him, please, that we have all the medical aid we require," replied Mrs. "Billy" wearily.

There ensued two or three profitless and uncomfortable hours, during which the remaining occupants of Cresthills did little more than try to appraise, according to their various natures, the probable results of this

fantastic trick which Fate had played them.

Mrs. "Billy," dry-eyed and almost motionless, seemed to be waiting for the next turn of the wheel. Her husband stared moodily at the floor. Aunt Emily threw herself on a leather-covered couch and sniffed plaintively. Larry Cheltingham paced aimlessly through the rooms and hallway. Now he chuckled and now he swore softly under his breath. As for Barbara, she had gone upstairs with a book.

It was nearly six o'clock when Aunt Emily broke the miserable spell by getting on her feet and facing Mrs. "Billy."

"Edith!" she exclaimed.

Mrs. "Billy" looked up at her listlessly.

"Edith," she repeated in a grieved tone, "I've eaten nothing but cake and sherbet since breakfast. Where is my dinner coming from and how soon will it be ready?"

Dinner! Where, indeed, was it to come from? Mrs. "Billy" thought of the deserted kitchen, of the servantless dining-room. During more than a score of years of married life she had occasionally stood almost on the verge of this domestic chasm, but always, at the eleventh hour, the abyss had been bridged. Twice the invaluable Tapley had stepped nobly to the rescue. But where was Tapley now? Locked up with the Thayer-Braytons in the Valeburg Town Hall! Once Marie had saved the day. And Marie was with Tapley, and with the Monksees, being fumigated.

Blankly, helplessly did Mrs. "Billy" face the fact that there were five persons still at Cresthills. Shudderingly she recalled that at least one of them was very hungry, and that another was the nephew of an earl.

V

"WELL?" demanded Aunt Emily at last.

"I'm sure, Emily, I can't tell you anything about dinner. I can't get

it. I wouldn't know how." And Mrs. "Billy" made a gesture of despair.

"Then I suppose I must starve," whined Aunt Emily, beginning to sniffle once more.

She did not starve, however, for not long after this Barbara appeared in the door to announce cheerfully:

"Come, I think you had all better have some dinner; it's ready."

She had changed her French gray garden frock for a shirt-waist and walking-skirt and she had enveloped herself in a huge white apron. Her sleeves were rolled back over her perfectly modeled arms. Her cheeks were very red, save where there were daubs of flour on them. Cheltingham eyed her approvingly.

"Dinner!" exclaimed Mrs. "Billy." "Who got it?"

"Why, I did, of course." Barbara said it as if she had always been getting dinners.

"But you can't cook, can you, Barbara?" asked her mother.

"I have written essays on the chemistry of foods, and I have studied the cook-book all the afternoon. Still, I'm afraid my biscuits are not all they should be. I expect I left out some of the things or got them together wrong. But they're hot. The other things I found in the refrigerator, and if Mr. Cheltingham will overlook——"

"He will," said that gentleman. "He feels very much honored—and he's disgracefully hungry."

There was no lack of room at the table. It had been laid for twenty.

They had barely ended the meal when remorseless Fate, in the person of Mr. Trent, of Trent & Packham, put the finishing touch to the present wretchedness of the house of Redkirk. Mrs. "Billy" came from the telephone looking worn and haggard. She had heard the worst, she said.

The new will, which the court had accepted, was a sweeping document. It gave the whole estate, including real and personal property, stocks, bonds and all other sources of income, entirely and unreservedly to the alleged widow of Jeremiah Redkirk, the

claimant person. To be sure, Mr. Trent was quite certain that this will was a rank forgery. He had promptly appealed the case, and was investigating the somewhat vague record of the woman in question. He hoped to discover things that would reverse the decision at the next term.

Unfortunately, however, the Redkirk millions were tied up hard and fast by an intricate maze of legal red tape. Acting with unscrupulous promptness and under the advice of her lawyers, the claimant had stormed the Redkirk city house and was there entrenched. Injunctions had been issued forbidding the attorneys of the Redkirk estate from paying out any funds, and a receiver for the entire property had been appointed.

"I told you, Edith, I told you!" moaned William Redkirk. "We're beggars. They'll put us out tomorrow."

Impatiently Mrs. "Billy" waved him to be silent, and continued her statement.

"Mr. Trent assures me that so long as we retain possession here we cannot be disturbed—at least, not until the appealed case has been decided against us. A deputy sheriff will be sent here to see that we do not sell or destroy any of the property, but he cannot force us out, and will not attempt to do so. And," she concluded bitterly, "that is about all we have left—a roof over our heads."

The sniffing of Aunt Emily punctuated the hush which followed. Billy Redkirk, looking a helpless mass of misery, stared at his wife, open-mouthed. Barbara began biting her lip. The atmosphere seemed almost damp from unshed tears.

Lawrence Cheltingham began to be very uncomfortable. He felt like a wedding guest who has strayed into the wrong house and has stumbled upon a funeral. He would have liked very much to have said something comforting and cheering, but he could think of nothing at all in that line. Abruptly the fact came home to him that he was very much out of place.

Making as little stir as possible, he arose from the table and left the room. Once outside he drew in a long breath of the sweet, July-scented evening air.

"Poor beggars!" he whispered to himself.

He strode across the lawn to where the striped marquee glimmered in the moonlight. Scattered about were the pathetic reminders of how bravely the day had begun, how sorrowfully it had ended. On the little tables were sherbet glasses partly filled with syrupy liquid. Fans and a fluffy parasol or two littered the chairs. On one table were spread out the costly knickknacks which had been meant for prizes. At a distance were the straw targets with arrows sticking in them, recalling the silly game which had been so hastily abandoned.

"It's a tremendous cropper they've come," soliloquized Mrs. "Billy's" most distinguished and sole remaining guest. "But the girl takes it like a thoroughbred. Who would have thought it, too! Why, I expected to see it crumple her like a trampled posy. Never a whimper, though! Instead, she tackles biscuits! And I took her for one of the matinee kind. No wonder she had the courage to lay me out so neatly. She's a new sort to me. I'd like to see how she pulls through this, hang me if I wouldn't! Wonder what she's up to now?"

As he turned to glance back at the dark bulk of the house he saw a figure in white steal out of a side door and cautiously move along the line of shrubbery leading toward the stables. Also he caught a glint of something suggesting a revolver. A dim light was visible in one of the stable windows, probably in the coachman's office. Promptly Cheltingham gave chase. As he neared the figure in white he whistled softly.

"Who are you?" The voice was low and tense. It came from behind a bush, and was accompanied by a sharp, metallic click.

"Cheltingham," he responded hastily.

"Oh!" There was much relief in

that exclamation. Barbara stepped from behind the bush and handed him a revolver. "Please take the thing, will you? I—I'm afraid it will go off. There's someone in the stables. I don't know who it can be, but I must find out. They know in the village that all the servants have left. It may be robbers."

Cheltingham laughed as he accepted the weapon.

"So you go hunting robbers all alone, do you? Where is your father?"

"I didn't tell him anything about seeing the light in the stables. He is worried enough, as it is. But do you think there are robbers out there?"

Cheltingham said it was most unlikely. He would investigate, however.

She watched him steal noiselessly across the lawn and approach a door next to the lighted window. She heard him throw a handful of pebbles against the glass. In a moment the door was opened cautiously, and there ensued a brief scuffle. Two minutes later Cheltingham appeared before her with an old, whiskered and badly frightened individual securely gripped by the collar.

"I've landed one," he announced. "There are others in the stable, but I've locked them in."

"Why, it's Peter!" exclaimed Barbara.

"Yis, mum," assented the prisoner; "it's me, though I'm that shook up I'm glad to hear you say it. I had to come back. I couldn't bear to think of those poor horses and cows and hens suffering without their suppers. So Mary an' me sneaked back. We'll go away again, though, if you say we must."

Peter, it seemed, was the gardener. Mary, his wife, was the laundress. They had been hiding in the woods all the afternoon, not having been included in the auto-load of refugees. On being reassured as to the absence of all contagion at Cresthills, and on learning the real trouble which had come to the Redkirks, they promptly announced their intention of staying as long as they were allowed.

"You'll run the risk of going hungry," suggested Barbara. "We're going to be frightfully poor."

But their loyal hearts were unshaken by this prospect. Peter was too good a gardener and Mary too much of a cook, each asserted of the other, for any such thing to be possible.

"You are both jewels," said Barbara as she left with Cheltingham for the house. She went inside, but soon came out on the portico, where Cheltingham was smoking in the moonlight.

"There's too much tragedy inside," she explained. "Mother is pacing the floor like Lady Macbeth in the sleep-walking scene, father is looking like a man about to be hanged, and Aunt Emily is sniffing again. I wish they wouldn't. It doesn't do any good."

Over his pipe-bowl Cheltingham looked curiously at her. He had a great desire to tell her what a trump she was, but that seemed hardly the appropriate thing. Probably she would have little interest in his opinion of her at that moment. If he could only say something soothing and comforting now!

"Things will look different in the morning," he ventured. "They always do. The lawyers will most likely straighten things out in a week or so."

Barbara shook her head. "No, it will be a long and tedious affair, and we may lose everything in the end. At best, it looks as if we were to be practically paupers for several months. And we don't know how to live without money. We must learn, though. I suppose I am thoroughly heartless, but the prospect does not seem a terrible one to me. I almost believe it will do us good."

"You're something of an optimist, aren't you?"

"Not exactly. But I am dissatisfied with the kind of life we have been living and were going to live. It's so utterly selfish and vapid. Honestly, now, don't you find American society rather a pitiful farce?"

"It's a good deal like society anywhere."

"But there's so much pretense about

it. We are always going to places where we don't want to go, and we are forever meeting a lot of people that we don't care about at all and pretending that we enjoy it. We are not genuine nor honest, even with ourselves. I don't pretend to know how we could change things for the better, and I don't expect to try to change them, but I do know that I am tired of it all, and that I'm not sorry to be out of it, even though I have been thrown out, as one might say. Which talk, I suppose, sounds very foolish to you."

"I wouldn't go so far as to say that, but I don't agree with your view. It wouldn't bore me very badly to live the way you have been living here."

"Yes, I believe I have heard you say something of the sort before—in the dining-car, you know."

Cheltingham chuckled. "I had forgotten that." Then, after a pause, he added, "It's an uncertain business, this heiress hunting."

"American fortunes are so unstable?" suggested Barbara.

"Yes, and the heiresses too wary."

"Now you are jesting," protested Barbara. "I wonder that you can."

"Sometimes I wonder that I can, too."

Barbara was puzzled by this. Was he entirely shameless; or, now that she had become a disinterested party, did he think he could afford to be frank with her? At any rate, it was an interesting revelation, quite in accord with her cynical views regarding men in general and Englishmen in particular. Miss Phoebe Allen would be delighted to hear of this case. Miss Phoebe held the chair of ancient literature at Barbara's college, and one of her pet diversions, when not dwelling on the virtues of old Homer, was to voice her scorn of modern man. Barbara had been much impressed. Now she knew that Miss Phoebe was right. Barbara looked with cold disapproval on this fortune-hunting nephew of an earl. He was calmly refilling his pipe.

"I think I can end this quarantine nonsense in the morning," she announced abruptly. "I shall telephone

the village authorities that it is all a stupid mistake. If they don't believe me they can send a physician to find out."

"Yes, and what then?" asked Cheltingham, busy with a match.

"Why, then you will be able to go away without—without being fumigated, and all that."

"Oh, I see!" he laughed. "And after that, after you have got rid of me, what do you propose doing?"

"I don't know exactly. I shall try to make some plans tomorrow. First I shall investigate the resources of Cresthills. With Peter to help me it ought to be made to produce something."

"It's a good deal like being cast away on an island, isn't it? Only you have a very fertile and charming island here, and you are more comfortably housed than are most castaways. You might advertise for summer boarders. Had you thought of that?"

"Yes, with a shudder. That would be my last resort."

"Your mother may have some plans."

"No. Whatever is done I must do. Mother is too much crushed to do anything. So is my father. But we have got to stay here and hold the fort, and I mean to do it."

"I—I like your grit," said Cheltingham, a little hesitatingly. "What would you say if I should volunteer to stay and help you hold it?"

Barbara considered this a moment before responding.

"Really, I would not know just what to say. I should imagine that you did not quite understand the situation. If we are to make Cresthills furnish us a living we must all work, you know."

"And you think I would be only a drone in the hive? You've no idea how useful I can be when I put my mind to it."

She shook her head.

"You will not care to volunteer, I am sure, when you hear my plans. Besides, it will be much better for your chances to go away. You might find your heiress."

And with this she left him smoking in the moonlight. As a matter of fact, there wasn't much else that he could do.

VI

CHELTINGHAM was astir early in the morning, even before Barbara, who began the new regime by rising long before seven o'clock. He found her laying the cloth for breakfast.

"I've had another talk with our friend, the constable," he announced as he came in. "He says that the town is paying him two dollars a day and that he likes the job. Fifty feet is as near as he would allow me to come to the dead line. He says he will bring up our mail and leave it in a cracker-box at the foot of the hill."

"Did he say anything about the guests and the servants?"

"Yes. They were all shipped out of town in a special train late last night. They were given all the honors of war, the local militia company and the fire department doing escort duty. One fat man—Mr. Monks, I judge—has threatened to sue the town for a fabulous amount."

Barbara tried to hide a smile, but failed.

"I suppose I ought to feel very badly about it," she said.

"Leave that to me; it's all on my head. Can't I help you with the table things?"

"You may ring the breakfast-gong at the foot of the stairs, if you like."

The bell-ringing was futile. No one answered its summons. So, after waiting for a time, Cheltingham and Barbara breakfasted together. The conversation was not brilliant, for each felt under some restraint. It was only when Barbara announced that she was going with Peter to look at the garden that Cheltingham brightened.

"I'd like to go along, too, if you don't mind," he said.

Why he should wish to go Barbara could not imagine, but she made no protest. He was quite enthusiastic

over Peter's vegetables. They were examining the strawberry-bed when their attention was attracted by a man who was standing at the foot of the carriage-drive waving his arms as if beckoning to them.

"I'll go down and see what he wants," offered Cheltingham.

On approaching the stranger Cheltingham saw that he was a short-legged, squatty little man with a round face and restless pop-eyes. He was rather shabbily dressed, but his manner was aggressive and important. At the distance of about twenty paces he raised his hand commandingly.

"That's near enough," he ordered.

Cheltingham obligingly stopped and waited, calmly expectant.

"I am Erastus J. Hicks," announced the squatty little man impressively. "I represent the Marshal of the United States Court of the Third New York District." Then, throwing back his coat, he tapped significantly a nickel-plated shield pinned to his suspender strap.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Hicks." Cheltingham gazed at the shield with apparent interest.

"I have been sent here to take charge of this property," continued Mr. Hicks, puffing out his chest and looking severe.

"Why don't you go ahead and take charge, then?" asked Cheltingham soothingly.

"Now, that's all right, young man," retorted Mr. Hicks, wagging his head shrewdly. "I know how things stand here. I've heard all about it. The law sends me to take charge, but it don't say I've got to risk my life a-doing it. I don't propose to come any nearer, but I want to give you my orders right now."

"Think you'd better give them to me, do you?"

"Oh, I don't do any thinking about it. I know. You're the very man I've been waiting around here for two hours to catch sight of. Now, I want you to understand that I'm responsible to the United States for all this property." Here Mr. Hicks waved his

arms around with such vagueness that he might have included half the universe.

"Quite a load of responsibility, I should imagine," suggested Cheltingham.

Mr. Hicks responded that it didn't bother him. He was used to it. "And what's more," he added, "I mean to keep an eye on you folks all the time, even though you don't see me around."

"That will be kind of you, Mr. Hicks."

"No, it won't. It's my duty. I'm here to see that you don't carry away things, nor sell them, nor do any damage. The law says that while you stay here you've got to treat things as if they belonged to someone else. That's what the law says."

When Mr. Hicks had quite finished and Cheltingham had started back up the hill he felt the stern gaze of the pop-eyes following. He reckoned that it struck him just below the shoulder-blades.

For a brief period Cheltingham allowed himself to be entertained by the incident, but then came the thought that the Redkirks would hardly be able to share this irresponsible view. He thought of Barbara and reflected that this aggressively important Mr. Hicks would undoubtedly interfere sadly with the plans which she was making. Hicks was absurd, to be sure, but at the same time he would be a very real tyrant to Barbara.

"Who was it?" she asked.

"The majesty of the law, intensified and personified. His name is Hicks."

"The deputy sheriff?" asked Barbara, with some little awe.

"Exactly. Sherifing is one of his functions, but from what he said I should gather that he was a kind of republican viceroy, a personal representative of the President. His sense of responsibility is vast. I'm afraid he's going to make trouble for you, Miss Redkirk."

Barbara looked nervously toward the spot where Mr. Hicks had been seen standing.

"Oh, he will not bother you while the quarantine lasts. He is too careful of Hicks for that. But when it is lifted you will see quite enough of him."

A worried, baffled look came into Barbara's usually calm eyes. Perhaps it was this which moved Cheltingham to renew his offer of the night before.

"I wish you would let me stay and help you, for awhile, anyway," he said impulsively. "You'll need some help in handling that Hicks fellow, and it would do me good to have the job. Besides, I'm not half so much afraid of work as you seem to think. I have done such a thing before. Will you give me a trial?"

Evidently he was in earnest. Still, Barbara was not convinced of his utility. Doubtfully she regarded this volunteer in correct tweeds and immaculate linen.

"It is very kind of you, of course; but what do you think, for instance, that you could do?"

Cheltingham smiled good-humoredly at her apparent distrust.

"I notice that you have a good flock of sheep over there," he said quite irrelevantly.

"Why, yes. Mother bought them because she thinks they look rather picturesque grazing over the lawn. What of them?"

"They could be put to better use than that. You see, I ought to know something about sheep. I bossed a sheep-ranch for a whole year in Australia. Isn't there a market near here?"

"I understand," said Barbara quickly. "You would count the sheep as a resource. I hadn't thought of that. Yes, there's the village market, but the big summer hotel, down by the Sound, would be better. I am planning to send our surplus vegetables and fruits there."

"Good! A summer hotel, eh? The very thing! They ought to take two or three sheep a week, and berries and asparagus and milk. Suppose I drive over there this forenoon and see if we can't arrange to supply them?"

"Would you? But—" Again she was surveying him doubtfully.

"Well, what now?"

"What do you think your uncle, the earl, would say?"

He laughed heartily at this.

"My respected uncle, the earl, does not bother himself about me. I don't mind telling you that he is trying to forget my very existence. The fact is, I don't stand very well with the earl. He wanted to make a rector out of me and have me settle down in some moss-grown old ruin where he could dole me out a bare living. And I—well, my father had just been made a colonel, he had been through India with Roberts and—and the rectorship didn't seem alluring. So I went into the army and the earl washed his hands of me."

"But your friends, society—" suggested Barbara.

"I shall consult neither my friends nor society. I can despatch and dress a lamb in seven minutes by the watch. I can shear wool and salt hides. Do you take me on?"

Barbara could do no less.

Early the next morning the Crest-hills wagonette was laden as perhaps it had never been laden before. There were boxes of strawberries, bunches of asparagus, baskets filled with peas, and a big can of fresh, creamy milk. All these good things were destined to be offered up to the two hundred and more guests at the big summer hotel on the Sound. The wagonette had become a vegetable cart. Yet the Crest-hills cobs stepped just as high and rattled their pole chains just as proudly as if they were still drawing fashionable folk to and from the station. Possibly they realized that their driver was the nephew of an earl.

Meanwhile the Board of Health physician had come and gone. The quarantine had been raised. The constable with the shotgun had been withdrawn and in his stead had appeared at the front door of the big house, a severe expression in his pop-eyes, and his shiny badge very much in evidence, Mr. Erastus J. Hicks.

Within two minutes after his arrival

Billy Redkirk had threatened to mishandle Mr. Hicks in various alarming ways, and Mr. Hicks was hinting broadly at a resort to firearms when Mrs. "Billy" came on the scene. She spent an hour in soothing the injured feelings of Mr. Hicks, and only half succeeded at that. When Barbara was summoned she examined his papers, looked at the nickel-plated shield and led Mr. Hicks to define his attitude in some detail. It was a hostile attitude. Mr. Hicks dwelt upon his responsibility to the Government for every dollar's worth of property in sight.

"Then you ought to make out a list of all the furniture and other things in the house," said Barbara. "If you don't, how can you know that nothing is taken away while you are here? I'll get a pencil and a blank-book for you and you may begin at once in the library. Perhaps you had better count the books first."

This had not been part of Mr. Hicks's program, but he accepted it and set to work. It was a long job. When Cheltingham returned and had seen a sample of Mr. Hicks's manner he almost begged for the privilege of leading the deputy sheriff out behind the stables and persuading him, after a fashion which he declined to state, to discharge his duties with more courtesy. But Barbara was firm. She would manage Hicks after a method of her own. She would allow no interference with him. And, Barbara being the recognized captain of the little garrison, her commands were obeyed.

For two days Hicks blustered about and bullied everyone who came near. Very calmly did Barbara endure this, listening patiently to his pompous commands and replying meekly, "Yes, Mr. Hicks," or "No, Mr. Hicks," as the case might be. Even Hicks softened a little under this treatment.

Finally, at the end of the second day, when Mr. Hicks was thoroughly tired of making that everlasting list of the multitude of things to be found in the Redkirk mansion, he seated

himself in a shady corner of the veranda and sighed wearily. Then he drew toward him a wicker porch-table and spread out thereon the contents of several paper bags. There were some soda crackers, a cylinder of bologna and a small pie, a baker's pie, one of the ten-cent size, with a varnished top. To this array he added a tin cup filled with water. Opening his pocket-knife, he proceeded to hack off some irregular slices of bologna.

Mr. Hicks went about all this with much deliberation. He betrayed no eagerness to begin his meal. It was not to be expected that he should. Bologna and crackers and baker's pie may answer well enough for a meal about once in twelve months. This was the fifth consecutive repast of that kind of which Mr. Hicks had partaken. He was beginning to loathe the sight of bologna and pies with varnished tops.

At this psychologic moment Barbara appeared on the veranda and viewed his preparations with much more interest than she had previously shown in his movements.

VII

"BOLOGNA, Mr. Hicks! Again? How fond you must be of it!" In Barbara's tone was a very good imitation of surprise.

Hicks looked from Barbara to the hunk of bologna, and made a grimace.

"Fond of it!" he repeated. "There ain't much of anything I like less."

"I don't like it, either. We never have it. Now, what do you suppose we *are* going to have for dinner, Mr. Hicks?" Here Barbara spread out the fingers of her left hand and told off the items, one by one. "Broiled chicken, hot biscuit, strawberries and cream, and coffee."

The lips of Mr. Hicks performed a noiseless evolution at the naming of every item. Then his eyes sorrowfully sought the hunk of cold bologna.

"Say," he responded, "I ain't had a meal worth calling a meal since I've

been on this case, and I'm 'most starved."

"Are you, really? Why, what a shame!" You might have thought Barbara had discovered some hidden injustice. "Well, you shall have one now if you'll follow me into the kitchen."

It was all there, as she had promised. The chicken was a crisp, golden brown, the biscuits as light as thisledown, the berries gleamed redly through the cream like—well, like nothing else in the world. As Mr. Hicks finished the last delicious spoonful and drained his second cup of coffee he sighed contentedly.

"I'm a good feeder, ma'am," he declared to Mary. "Allus was a good feeder, but that's one of the best meals I ever had. I want to say right here that you're a mighty good cook, and that Miss Barbara is a real lady."

That marked the surrender of Hicks. Before the week was through he had taken his place in Barbara's little working force. He fed and watered the horses, helped Peter to milk, chopped kindling wood, even peeled potatoes and scrubbed the kitchen floor for Mary. In some deft manner which Mr. Hicks himself could not have explained, his load of responsibility to the United States Government had been transferred to the graceful shoulders of "the real lady," but with no uncomfortable loss of dignity.

"I must consult with Mr. Hicks about that," Barbara would say in his presence whenever any question arose as to the technical rights of those who held possession of Cresthills. These consultations might seem, to any credulous onlooker unacquainted with Barbara's tactics, to be interesting exhibitions of hypnotic suggestion. First Barbara determined what she wished to do and then Mr. Hicks was led to define exactly that course. Thus it was that all the perishable products of the estate, from the fruits on the trees to the sheep in the fields, were laid under tribute.

"Possession is nine p'int's of the law," Hicks would solemnly declare.

"If we don't own these things, who does?"

He had come to count himself, you see, not as an emissary of the enemy, but as a member of the garrison.

The subduing of Aunt Emily, however, was a different matter. Accustomed to regard the universe as an imperfectly designed scheme to minister to her special comforts and material needs, she was wholly out of harmony with the new order of things at Cresthills. It was Mrs. "Billy" who persuaded Aunt Emily to use a dustpan and broom, to make the beds and to rise in time for a seven-o'clock breakfast. Just how Mrs. "Billy" did it she never told, but Aunt Emily became a working unit, even though she sometimes did weep into the dustpan.

As for Mrs. "Billy" herself, while she went about her duties with a kind of mechanical willingness, she had neither enthusiasm nor interest. She accepted Barbara's plans without question, and made no suggestions of her own. Her hopes and ambitions had been put away, but she still brooded over them in secret. With mournful eyes she regarded the cheerfulness which came to Billy Redkirk as his work in field and garden began to strengthen his flabby muscles and put a healthy color in his cheeks. She shuddered when she saw him come in with shirt sleeves rolled up and his trousers tucked into the tops of riding-boots, which he had adopted for garden work. For a time she insisted that he dress for dinner every night, as usual, but at last he rebelled. He was too tired for such nonsense, he said. And Cheltingham didn't, so why need he? Billy, you see, was inclined to revert. Yet Mrs. "Billy" donned a dinner gown every night.

"I shall continue to wear them until they are all worn out," she declared to Barbara. "They ought to last for several years. I suppose I shall wear them after I get to the poorhouse."

Barbara could only laugh at this. She could not laugh, however, when her mother wept at sight of her daughter's berry-stained fingers. Absurd though

it seemed, her grief at that spectacle was genuine.

"Poor mother," said Barbara, putting an arm about her waist. "Don't worry about things. Perhaps they will all come out right some day. The stains will, at any rate, with a little lemon juice."

They were beginning to understand each other better in those days than ever before. The cold, calm, distant Barbara developed by degrees into a warm, loving Barbara who seemed very near. By tacit consent they never alluded to the past, never speculated as to the remote future. One brought too many regrets, the other was too vague.

Nor was Lawrence Cheltingham ever made the subject of discussion between them. Mrs. "Billy" had been puzzled when she first learned that he was to remain, and had expected to understand his motive by observing Barbara. As nothing which Barbara did or said offered explanation, Mrs. "Billy" concluded that Cheltingham had been moved by an exaggerated sense of loyalty to her husband, a loyalty which prevented him from leaving them while they were in trouble. She looked for him to tire of this and leave almost any day.

Barbara, too, was mystified. She studied the Englishman closely, wondering why he continued to stay and to work as he did. There was no longer any doubt as to his utility. Without his executive ability, his tireless energy and his keen enthusiasm for making Cresthills produce every dollar that was in the land, the Redkirk experiment would hardly have proved to be such a success.

Yet his motive was still unexplained. It was not a sentimental one; Barbara was sure of that. In the beginning she had been on her guard against this, for she did not intend to indulge in any foolish romance nor encourage futile dreams. She had made up her mind to check promptly any silliness that he might develop, even though the action deprived her of her most valuable assistant. But there was no occasion to

check anything. Cheltingham's attitude toward her was that of a good comrade, nothing more. He attempted no gallant speeches, gave her no flattering glances.

All of which should have been most satisfactory to Barbara. That it was not she would have vigorously denied. Yet, in her daily contact with Cheltingham she was conscious of a something that was lacking. It was neither respect nor deference. It was that unspoken, subtle tribute which every beautiful woman exacts from all men but which she affects to ignore.

Cheltingham had ceased to pay this tribute, either with tongue or eyes, and she knew that he could be eloquent with both. As a result, Barbara was piqued. In various ways she betrayed it, yet Cheltingham was apparently oblivious. He did not openly avoid her, but during his spare moments he seemed to prefer the society of her father and Mr. Hicks. Every evening after dinner the three men played billiards for an hour or more, and then Cheltingham would read or write letters until bedtime.

Along in August Mr. Cheltingham received a cablegram and several letters which seemed to convey important news. Once he was called to the city for a day, but he returned to resume his morning trips to the hotel, as though nothing had happened.

It was soon after this, however, that Barbara became conscious of a slight change in his manner toward her. Once or twice she discovered that he was looking at her in a fashion quite different from anything she had ever noticed before. Her first impulse was to return the look in a manner that would clearly indicate her disapproval. On second thought, however, Barbara concluded that this would be treating him ungratefully.

So, when she found him observing her, she merely dropped her long lashes and pretended not to have seen. After more deliberate reflection Barbara admitted to herself that it would be silly of her to resent such glances. They did no harm. She was not entirely

certain that she did not like them. Had they come from any other man, of course, she would have acted differently. But Mr. Cheltingham had proved himself to be so different from other men. She really owed him an apology for having so hastily misjudged him at first.

Barbara developed an interest in the books which Mr. Cheltingham was reading. She was delighted to learn that Meredith was his favorite novelist. They talked about Diana and Richard Feverel by the hour. She was amazed to find that he was reading "Captain Cook's Voyages" for the fifth time. They disagreed amiably as to Kipling. They talked of man in the abstract. Barbara quoted Miss Phoebe Allen. Cheltingham cited some sayings of Grandmother O'Rourke, who had been a noted flirt.

The after-dinner billiard game became two-handed.

Whether it had been a mere whim, a distinct motive or just an impulse which had prompted Cheltingham to cast his lot in with these folk at Crest-hills, his lingering there was now no mere perfunctory matter of loyalty. He was making the discovery that there were several Barbaras contained within this one regal young person, whose first appearance had been so dazzling.

Just how many Barbaras there were he could never be quite sure, but they were all charming. Even the haughty, autocratic Barbara whom he remembered as taking his measure with scornful glance, he was unwilling to forget. The sober Barbara, who took herself so seriously and demanded that you make the same valuation, she, too, he gladly admitted to the list. Then there were the gentle, sympathetic Barbara; the restless, fidgety Barbara, who might be expected to fly off at almost any tangent, and who was wholly illogical to the other Barbaras; as well as the pensive, thoughtful Barbara, who came at rare intervals, her presence suggesting that if one knew how, one might whisper comforting things in her ear. Also there was a whimsical Barbara, with a

rare appreciation for the humor of things; a Barbara who must be coaxed into being, caught unawares and enjoyed while the mood lasted.

All these Barbaras had Lawrence Cheltingham discovered where he had known but one. He was highly pleased with himself because he had done it. Never before had he realized that the merely feminine could be so charming. For, of course, it was nothing else. It was not simply that Barbara was beautiful. He had seen before faultless figures, flower-like faces and big, expressive eyes; had seen them appreciatively, just as he had seen fair landscapes, fine horses and wonderfully lighted Arctic skies.

But Barbara was Barbara, and there was none other like her. It was a privilege to be near her, to know her moods, to share some of her thoughts. To be awarded comradeship with Barbara was delicious. Mr. Cheltingham's gray-blue eyes no longer held any audacity in them when he looked at her.

And Barbara—Barbara found it necessary, one day, to ride to the village with Mr. Cheltingham. It was the whimsical Barbara. She insisted on being helped up on the driver's seat beside him.

"Did you think I would allow you to play coachman?" she demanded. "Besides, I've often wanted to ride up here. I have done a lot of things in the past few weeks that I had always thought would be nice to do."

Cheltingham chirruped to the cobs, and the carriage rounded the first curve on two wheels.

"Is the doing of them as nice as you thought it would be?"

"Yes—and no," said Barbara, bracing her feet firmly beside his. "This is even nicer. But then, you drive ever so much better than John did, and faster."

"You would recommend me, then, if I should want a situation? But some of the other things were not so much fun as you expected."

"They're not so interesting."

"For instance——?"

"Making out weekly bills and keeping accounts. It's tremendously monotonous, figuring so many dozen eggs at so much a dozen, so many quarts of milk at so much a quart."

"Worse than giving house-parties?"

"I would be willing to give one a week until Christmas. Do you know, I think I could appreciate seeing anybody now. That is one of the reasons why I wished to ride down to the village today. I'm hungry for the sight of folks. Just think, we have been practically isolated for so long! I can imagine how lighthouse-keepers and polar explorers must feel."

"But you have been living a very useful life, you know. We have been producing things, making two blades of grass grow, and all that. Think of the crates of berries, the bushels of peas and the gallons of milk we have furnished to those summer boarders at the hotel! Nothing vapid nor frivolous about that."

"No, nor inspiring, either. I suppose someone must do it, but I am convinced that it is not my sphere."

"I was convinced of that long ago," said Cheltingham.

She glanced up quickly, as if to read in his eyes more than the words conveyed, but he was watching the horses.

"It seems as if I did not fit in anywhere. I wonder," she said musingly, "where I really do belong?"

He made no reply to this, but in a moment he said, apparently forgetting her remark: "I've never told you, have I, about the place where my uncle lives—his country home, I mean?"

"No," said Barbara, a little perplexed.

"It's rather a noble old ramshackle, part castle, part modern. The castle was built by a savage old baron nearly three hundred years ago. It is on the side of a hill. There's a very pretty view from the turret. In the whole building there are a hundred and odd rooms. Some of those in the new part are quite fit to live in. I have some photographs of it in my trunk that I'd

like to show you some day. You mustn't let me bore you, though, telling about the place. You see, I lived there until I was fifteen, and I can never get over thinking that Kelvey Castle is the finest place in England, which it isn't, of course. But the nearest I ever get to being homesick is when I think of those old poplars, those big rooms and those old servants who poke about through them."

"Aren't you sorry that you quarreled with the earl?"

He just looked at her, steadily, earnestly, perhaps somewhat warmly, and shook his head. Barbara did not ask why he was not sorry. She simply dropped her lashes under his gaze.

VIII

How slowly the bud forms, yet how unexpectedly does it burst into bloom!

They were no more than a mile nearer the village, yet they were talking it over. For Cheltingham, wholly charmed by a fleeting vision of the pensive Barbara, reveling in the nearness of her lovely self, electrified by the touch of her shoulder against his, had suddenly reined in the cobs under the shade of a great elm that arched the highway, and there, in full view of some half-dozen haymakers just across the roadside fence, had impetuously declared that he loved her very much indeed. It was a most comprehensive declaration. The fire of it burned in his eyes, its energy shook the strong hand which he held toward her.

Like a resisting tree caught in a flood, Barbara was swayed by the very rush of it. For a moment she seemed to yield, and with his free arm he caught her fiercely to him. Her head nestled for an instant on his shoulder.

The haymakers stared. It was natural that they should.

But the spectacle was brief. With a sigh that was half a sob Barbara straightened, freed herself from his

impertinent arm, and panted protestingly:

"No, no, no! I—I am sorry—you had no right!"

"I took it, Barbara. It is the right of every man who loves. You do not doubt that I love you, do you, Barbara?"

"No, no! Only——"

"Then there is no reason under heaven why I should not tell you so—unless—unless—Barbara, you do not despise me, do you?"

She shook her head.

"That is sufficient. I am not bold enough to ask that you love me—yet. But I want you to. Oh, Barbara, you must! For I mean to win you, to carry you away, to hold you forever. I am ready to do it now. I saw a church back there, and a parsonage. Shall we drive back, Barbara?"

Again Barbara shook her head. She had turned away from him. Her shoulders rose and fell throbbingly with the storm of her emotions. It was very disturbing to listen to such impetuous words. Was this, then, the way men made love? It was surprising, bewildering. For Barbara had her own preconceived notions of love and love-making. At college she had studied and read about it in books. Miss Phoebe Allen had devoted a whole lecture to what she loftily styled "the primitive and elemental sentiment." While many of the young ladies had giggled all through the lecture, Barbara had drunk it in. She had then decided that the only manner in which a gentleman could make such crude sentiments pleasing to the ear of a refined woman would be by a courtly and dignified statement.

Mr. Cheltingham's method was anything but that. Yet Barbara was strangely thrilled. She had listened eagerly, the blood surging into her cheeks, all her nerves deliciously alert. And no sooner did she realize this than she bent her whole will toward the subduing of this shameful weakness. What would Miss Allen think of her!

The haymakers, seeing no further developments, grinned at one an-

other and returned to their work. There are always lovers, but second-crop clover must be cured while the sun shines.

"Please drive on," she said at length.

He did, but kept the horses in a walk.

"Barbara, when will you marry me?" he asked.

"I shall never marry you."

"I don't believe that. Why do you think you will not?"

She would make no reply to this.

"Is it because I am only a polo-playing Englishman? I've quit polo, and I'm half Irish, anyway. Besides, I am going to do some fine things in the world, just for you. Will you believe that, now?"

She smiled soberly in response.

"You don't hold it against me that my uncle is an earl?"

Her eyes told him that she did not.

"Or that silly talk you overheard in the dining-car?"

"Of course not!"

"Then why?" he insisted.

Barbara would not say. They drove on. As they entered the village he asked her once again why she thought that she would never marry him. She was watching some children at play and did not reply. As he helped her to alight before one of the shops he whispered the same question. When she came out he repeated it. When they called at the post-office for the mail he made the query once more.

"You're a goose," said Barbara.

"I love you," said Cheltingham.

"Will you tell the town about it?"

"Yes, if the town will listen. Do you love me at all, Barbara?"

"I—I don't know."

"When you find out will you tell me?"

"Certainly not. Now let us drive home."

On the way back he whistled to the horses. He cut off daisy-heads with the whip-lash. He looked at Barbara joyously, his face aglow. As they neared the elm he pulled the cobs to a walk.

"It was here, Barbara, that I told you. I shall never forget this spot. Some day I may erect a shrine here."

"The farmers would like a drinking-trough better."

"It shall be both. It is beautiful, Barbara, to think that you know, that I have told you."

At last, as the only way of getting him down from the clouds, Barbara stated her position firmly and plainly. As a prospective pauper she could not marry anyone. She could not even contemplate an escape from misfortune by such a course. Her own self-respect would not allow her to think of such a thing.

"But look at the risk I run!" exclaimed Cheltingham. "Why, you're liable to get all your money back again! Then see where I stand! But I don't stop for that. Fortune or no fortune, I want you."

Barbara sighed. "I wish you would be sensible."

"And I wish you would let me drive back to the parsonage."

"You must stop it," said Barbara firmly. "I shall never marry you."

"Once there was a Cheltingham who asked the lady of his choice every Saturday for a year before she finally said 'yes'; and she wasn't half as charming as you, Barbara. I know, because she was the lady of the second earl and her portrait hangs in the great hall at Kelvey."

"After the third Saturday she should have sent word that she was not in," suggested Barbara.

"She couldn't very well do that, you know, for she *was* in, and he knew it. He had locked her in and carried the key himself. If you will come with me to Kelvey I will show you the very rooms in the tower."

"No, thank you; I prefer to remain where I am not obliged to say 'no' every Saturday."

This modern Cheltingham either lacked the savage persistence of the second earl, or else he was wiser, for he drove the remainder of the way to Cresthills almost in silence.

Mrs. "Billy" was standing at an

open window as they drove up. Perhaps she sighed a little regretfully as she watched them. Something in the manner of Cheltingham as he helped Barbara to alight arrested her attention. Also, there was an odd look in Barbara's eyes as she came in to hand her some letters.

"Barbara," she asked, "did you enjoy your drive?"

"No—yes—that is, of course I did." The pink and white came and went in Barbara's cheeks in telltale fashion.

"Ah!" said Mrs. "Billy" quietly. "You did and you didn't. I understand."

"But you don't, mother, you can't."

"No? Let me explain: There were moments when you remembered other drives into the village under different conditions, drives when John was with us and Cresthills was all our own. Those moments you did not enjoy. But Mr. Cheltingham can be very entertaining when he is in the mood. I have no doubt that he helped you to forget—and then you did enjoy the drive. Come, Barbara, am I not right?"

Barbara shook her head. "I forgot only for a single moment."

"And what made you forget then, Barbara?"

Barbara hesitated. She had not meant to confide to her mother this new and disturbing experience. Her only impulse had been to hide it away from everyone, to shut it out even from her own thoughts. But instinct is strong. So out came the confession.

"It was when Mr. Cheltingham asked me to marry him."

"Barbara!" Mrs. "Billy" said it eagerly. She arose and held out her arms to her daughter.

But Barbara waved her away. "It was a very short moment, mother. Then I remembered that Cresthills was no longer ours, that nothing was ours."

"But it shall be yet, Barbara. I have not given up hope; I never shall."

"It is well enough to hope," said Barbara soberly. "I, too, hope that it will all come back to us some day. But every beggar hopes."

"And you told him——?"

"I told Mr. Cheltingham that I could not marry him to escape poverty."

"Did you, Barbara!" There was an unexpected ring in Mrs. "Billy's" tone. "You refused him, the nephew of an earl! Barbara, I—I think I am proud of you."

This time Barbara did not wave away the invitation of her mother's open arms. According to the conventional feminine code, tears were due. Barbara shed them. Mrs. "Billy" shed them. For several minutes they enjoyed a damp and perfectly lovely time together. At the end of it Barbara had discovered what it really meant to have a mother, while Mrs. "Billy" rejoiced in a daughter regained.

"I am sorry for poor Lawrence," said Mrs. "Billy" at length.

"And not at all for poor me?" asked Barbara.

"Do you, Barbara? Do you care for him in that way?"

"I—I think I could," was the half-whispered admission; "but he must never know."

"No," sighed Mrs. "Billy." "Poor fellow! He must never know."

IX

ONE of those letters which Barbara had handed her mother carried a concealed thunderbolt, as letters sometimes do. Outwardly it was an innocent-appearing missive, the notepaper being that of a Boston hotel; but after Mrs. "Billy" had read it and re-read it she threw the sheet scornfully from her and stared very hard at nothing at all. Gradually there crept into Mrs. "Billy's" eyes a look of desperate determination.

The letter was from Mrs. Joseph Barnley, who, previous to becoming Mrs. Barnley, had successively been the wife and the widow of Mrs. "Billy's" only brother. Her home was not in Boston but in St. Louis. Here is what Mrs. "Billy's" quondam sister-in-law had to say:

DEAR EDITH: I suppose you will not mind my writing to you, now that you are no

longer such a *grande dame*. I shall not venture to offer my sympathy, although I did feel for you when I read that you had lost all your money. No, I think something more substantial than sympathy would be better appreciated from me. Joe had to come East on a business trip and brought me along. On our way back he is going to let me stop off long enough to see what we can do for you. I expect that by this time you must be near the point where even such humble folk as Joe and I might be of help to you. Now, do not let any false pride keep you from telling me just what you need. I will look around, see how you are situated, and then I will ask Joe to do something handsome. Expect me on the noon train, Thursday.

Yours as ever,

LIZZIE.

So Mrs. Joe Barnley was coming to Cresthills. She meant to "look around" and see just how they were situated, to see how the mighty were fallen. She was coming to dispense charity. You should have seen Mrs. "Billy's" chin as she made these reflections.

It was an old feud, running back to the days when Mrs. "Billy," newly come to the handling of the Redkirk millions, had politely but firmly declined a visit from her former sister-in-law. She had never liked Mrs. Barnley, the sharp-nosed, smooth-tongued, black-eyed woman who had so plainly shown her envy of every good fortune that had come to the mistress of Cresthills.

And now Mrs. Barnley intended to patronize her, to humble her with cheap gifts and cheaper sympathy. There was no avoiding her, either. She had not asked if she would be welcome. She meant to march in on them, just as the good women who do slum work march unbidden into the tenements of the poor. Possibly she expected to overwhelm them by leaving a fifty-dollar order at the grocer's. Or she might offer to send on some of her second-best dresses.

Mrs. "Billy" was reading the letter to Barbara and Aunt Emily when Billy Redkirk came in, breathless and agitated.

"More of our kind of luck, Edith," he announced. "Guess what's up now?"

"I couldn't," said Mrs. "Billy." "What is it?"

"The hotel has burned to the ground. I've just been watching the fire. There goes our market!"

"I suppose that means," said Barbara, "that we must eat our own green corn and peas. We've such a lot, too. We could never sell it all in the village."

"It means that we are about at the end of our rope, so far as money goes," declared Billy Redkirk.

"Then you will be delighted to know," said Mrs. "Billy," with grim sarcasm, "that we are about to be visited in our extremity by an angel in disguise. Mrs. Joe Barnley is coming tomorrow on a charitable mission."

"The angelic Lizzie!" Billy Redkirk groaned.

"Here is her most gracious announcement," and Mrs. "Billy" tossed him the letter.

"Oh, Lord!" exclaimed Billy as he read the missive. "Can't we stave her off? What do you mean to do, Edith?"

"I am just planning her reception," said Mrs. "Billy" quietly.

Billy Redkirk looked at his wife curiously. When Edith talked like that she meant something. She was aroused at last. Energetically she took up the business. Of Barbara she asked just how much money remained in the family treasury.

"There's nearly two hundred dollars," said Barbara wonderingly.

"I want it," said Mrs. "Billy" promptly. Then she went to Cheltingham.

"Mr. Cheltingham, I suppose a great many persons over at the hotel are without shelter and don't know where to go," she suggested.

"Undoubtedly," said Cheltingham.

"I have decided to offer some of them the hospitality of Cresthills until they can make other arrangements," said Mrs. "Billy." "Would you mind driving over and bringing back a dozen or more? Please select a good-looking, agreeable lot. And while you are there, will you not engage half a

dozen maids? I shall want them only for a day or so, but they ought to be glad to go anywhere. Perhaps you had better have Peter take the other team for the maids. Do you think you can do all that?"

Cheltingham appeared slightly bewildered, but he assented and started at once on his errand.

"Mother, what does all this mean?" demanded Barbara.

Mrs. "Billy" smiled confidently. "Folly, my dear Barbara, nothing but sheer folly. Wait and see."

Then she went to the telephone and called up several village stores, giving some lavish orders.

"But, mother," protested Barbara, "we can't afford to buy such things now."

"I know it, Barbara. But tomorrow we are to entertain Mrs. Joseph Barnley. I should like to do it well."

Then Barbara understood.

"But what will Mr. Cheltingham think of us?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. "Billy." "I shall tell him my plan when he returns. I only hope he will bring us a good-looking lot of guests."

He did. There were fifteen of them, mainly disconsolate women whose trunks were ashes and whose husbands had scurried cityward to ransack homes for other apparel. But they were agreeable persons, and very grateful to Mrs. "Billy" for her thoughtful generosity. Also, as the fire had broken out late in the afternoon, when most of them had been attending a euchre in the big parlors, they were wearing their best gowns. Altogether they made a very presentable company.

Peter arrived soon after with six neat but still frightened maids. Mrs. "Billy" took them in hand, and soon had them busily engaged in putting the guest-chambers to rights. Once more Cresthills hummed with activity.

Billy Redkirk moved about as one in a daze. Aunt Emily, on the contrary, revived wonderfully. She did not know what it was all about. She merely understood that the big house,

which had seemed so vacantly lonesome, was again filled with guests and servants. So she rejoiced. She listened contentedly as three different versions of the burning of the hotel were poured into her ears at the same time by as many agitated women.

Late in the evening, when the last grateful guest had retired, there was held a family council.

"What do you think of them?" demanded Cheltingham.

"Splendid," said Mrs. "Billy." "How did you manage to pick out such nice people?"

"It was easy enough. I found the manager, and told him that you wished to be of some assistance to his unfortunate guests. Then, in a casual sort of way, I suggested that as we could accommodate only a few we might as well have the most congenial ones. He was delighted. He said, of course, we should have the cream of the lot. So I sat on a rescued water-cooler, and he brought them around. They were delighted, too. They said some very nice things about you on the way over. Yes, they do seem to be nice folks. Very presentable, too, except for a lack of headgear. There isn't a hat in the crowd. But they'll have millinery enough by tomorrow, judging from the instructions they gave their husbands before they left; and when they get their hats they'll all start for home."

"But they mustn't leave until afternoon. We must arrange that in some way," said Mrs. "Billy" decidedly.

"Oh!" said Cheltingham. "I didn't understand your program."

Then she told him of the threatened visitation from Mrs. Barnley and her unwelcome charitable intentions.

"Of course," said Mrs. "Billy," "I am very foolish. I am spending almost all the money there is left. But I don't care. If Mrs. Barnley chooses to come here to inspect our poverty, let her come."

"Bully for you, Mrs. Redkirk!" exclaimed Cheltingham. "You may count on me!"

So, when the messenger of charity

arrived on the noon train, she was astonished to see the supposed object of philanthropy sitting in the Redkirk brougham behind the dancing Redkirk cobs, an extremely smart-looking coachman on the driver's seat.

"It's so good of you, Lizzie," murmured Mrs. "Billy" as she extended a welcoming hand to the black-eyed Mrs. Barnley.

"Then you haven't lost your carriage and horses yet?" was Mrs. Barnley's first comment.

"Lost them!" Mrs. "Billy's" fine eyebrows lifted inquiringly. Then, as if suddenly recalling something, "Ah! I see. Your letter—you have been reading those horrid, sensational newspapers, haven't you, my dear? They *do* exaggerate scandalously."

"Edith, do you mean to say it isn't so?" Mrs. Barnley stiffened against the broadcloth cushions. On her sharp features was a look of dismay and alarm.

Mrs. "Billy" favored her with an amused smile. "How comforting it is to be assured of such sympathy as yours, my dear, even though one isn't in actual need of it."

"But it *is* so, isn't it?" insisted Mrs. Barnley. "You *have* lost your fortune, haven't you, Edith?"

Mrs. "Billy" laughed easily. "It is really too bad that you should be so disturbed over the matter, Lizzie. Newspapers should not be allowed to print such things. Of course, there has been more or less fuss in the courts and all that, but—well, we are still at Cresthills, you see. And you must stay over for luncheon with us and tell me about your dear Joe. Is he still connected with that odious hog-killing establishment?"

Mrs. Barnley did not tell her about Joe. Her black eyes were searching Mrs. "Billy" for indications of poverty and want. They were hardly in evidence, for Mrs. "Billy" was attired in that same regal costume of silk and lace in which she had received the Thayer-Braytons and the other distinguished members of that ill-starred house-party two months before.

"It is really a shame that you cannot stay over for a day or two," said Mrs. "Billy" as they neared Cresthills, "but there's such a crowd here now that I'm afraid I shouldn't know where to put you. They are charming people. You must meet them."

"Guests, too!" Mrs. Barnley almost shrieked her astonishment. Had she not been so intent on gazing at Mrs. "Billy" she might have noted that the shoulders of the smart-looking coachman were shaking in a most unprofessional manner. "Do you mean to say, Edith, that you have the house full of guests?"

"Only fourteen or fifteen, my dear. Cresthills is such a mere box of a place, you know," said Mrs. "Billy" depreciatively.

And at that moment, as they swung around the curving driveway, the big mansion came into view. Perhaps it did look impressive in the eyes of Mrs. Barnley, for from that point it loomed larger and more imposing than from any other. Certainly there was no lack of life about the place. Scattered over the wide lawns were several groups of persons. The striped marquee had once more been pressed into service. Games were in progress. Neat maids were in evidence. From the veranda came the buzz of gay chatter. To all intents it was a gala scene, quite as good to look upon as that former affair to which Mrs. Barnley had not been bidden.

Barbara had carried out her share of the program to the letter. She was making these hatless, houseless, trunkless people forget for the moment the tragedy of yesterday. It had been an easy task and a pleasant one. From the billiard-room came the click of balls and the voices of men. Billy Redkirk had needed no prompting to do his share.

Mrs. Barnley's wide eyes took it all in. Then she turned to Mrs. "Billy" with an awed look.

"Edith," she asked chokingly, "what—what did you think when you read my letter?"

"Oh, I quite understood. You see,

Lizzie, I have known you for a long time. But come, here we are. I must leave you with Barbara until luncheon is served."

When Mrs. Barnley beheld Barbara she suffered another shock. She had not seen her since Barbara was a ten-year-old miss with a dolly and a maid. Today Barbara was wearing one of those pastel gowns and looking as though she had just strayed from a Watteau print.

At luncheon the guests were radiant and in high spirits. Why not? Even the best appointed summer hotel can hardly offer the attractions of such a place as Cresthills. Possibly they were somewhat at a loss to understand why the charming Mrs. Redkirk should entertain them in such lavish manner. For nothing had been spared. The great round dining-table was brave with cut-glass and snowy damask and glittering silver and dainty china. There was a profusion of cut flowers. There were four kinds of wine.

They were adaptable folk, these persons from the burned hotel. They chattered brilliantly of art and literature and music and the doings of society. Their attitude toward Mrs. Redkirk was one of subtle deference, which was the acme of polite flattery.

"What an admirable hostess she is!" said a distinguished-appearing woman in an aside to Mrs. Barnley.

"Isn't she!" responded Mrs. Barnley faintly. She had become thoroughly subdued, cowed into silence by the glamour with which she found Mrs. "Billy" surrounded. She wondered if these ladies were all wives of multimillionaires, if they were all social celebrities. One of them mentioned a duke. Mrs. Barnley held her breath. What if they should discover that she was from St. Louis and that her husband was connected with pork-packing!

When the ordeal was over she retreated to a quiet corner and consulted a time-table. There was a train to the city in half an hour.

"Must you go?" asked Mrs. "Billy."
"It was charming of you to come and—
and look around, you know. And don't

forget to ask dear Joe to do something handsome, will you?"

As the Redkirk cobs whirled her to the station, one bitter reflection kept Mrs. Barnley company. It concerned the traveling-gown which she was wearing. She had thought it rather fetching when she put it on in St. Louis. But how had Mrs. "Billy's" elegant guests regarded it?

"They must have thought me a fright," was her conclusion. It was not a consoling thought. She even fancied that she detected a grin on the face of the aristocratic coachman as he drove away.

Perhaps Mrs. Barnley would have felt better if she could have heard the remark of Billy Redkirk on the following day. Cresthills was again without guests. The husbands had come, with hats and suit-cases, and had departed with profuse thanks. Also the maids had been sent away.

"What are we to do now?" demanded Billy Redkirk of his wife.

X

THE crisis in the Redkirks' affairs had indeed reached an acute stage. There was no denying that. The market-gardening makeshift had come to an inglorious end. It was now late in August, but it would be weeks before the courts would even begin to take up, in their own leisurely way, the accumulated gist of business. It would be months, possibly years, before the case of Redkirk *vs.* Redkirk could be brought to trial. And in the meantime—what?

"I never before realized," commented Mrs. "Billy" bitterly, "that one could be starved by legal process."

"The law seems to be quite equal to that," observed Cheltingham. He, too, was discouraged. For the third time that day Barbara had refused to listen to him.

"If I were a man," declared Mrs. "Billy," "I would do something."

Billy Redkirk winced. "But what is there to do, my dear?" he protested.

"First of all, I would go up and see what those lawyers are about. I don't believe they are doing anything. What is it to them whether we starve or not? They don't care. But I would make them care!"

"If I knew anything about law, perhaps I could tell them what they ought to do," began Billy.

"I could," said his wife. "Why don't they find out who this Cuddy-back person is and where she got that will? Why don't they look her up and prove that she is a forger, and send her to prison?"

"I think I agree with you, Mrs. Redkirk," assented Cheltingham, who for the first time was taking a lively interest in the will case. "They should investigate that woman's record, it seems to me. I'll tell you what! I have some business of my own to attend to in town; suppose I drop in and see your lawyers and try to prod them up?"

Mrs. "Billy" gave him a grateful look. Even Barbara smiled approvingly. Then and there it was arranged that Cheltingham should, as he put it, "go on a scouting expedition into the camp of the enemy." How literally he was to do this he did not then conceive. Mrs. "Billy" sat down at once to prepare a letter of introduction to Trent & Packham.

Before starting in the morning Cheltingham contrived to have a talk with Barbara. He had found her coming from the garden with a big bunch of sweet peas. Some of the flowers were pink and white, and they were gemmed with morning dew, but to Cheltingham they seemed not half so fresh and lovely as the cheeks against which they were held.

"I suppose you will at least wish me good luck," he said.

"Why shouldn't I?" asked Barbara.

"But you haven't much faith that I will do anything worth while, have you?"

Barbara shook her head.

"There's no telling," he went on. "I may, after all. I have had some

good luck myself, of late, that I've been wanting to tell you about. It's a legacy, quite a nice sum. And there's something more. The earl wants me to come back to Kelvev Castle. Barbara, I wish you would come, too."

"I know," said Barbara, a little wistfully. "But please do not ask me again. When do you go?"

"Whenever you will go with me, Barbara."

She turned from him, a troubled look in her eyes.

"Don't," she whispered pleadingly.

"Then I must go and straighten out this will case at once. I shall stir up those lawyers if I have to shake them until their teeth rattle. I shall see the judges and scold them for not holding court in the summer. I shall ask them if they're not ashamed of themselves. And then, when I have done all the grand and noble things I can think of, when I come back to you with your fortune in one hand and my heart in the other, will you say yes?"

Barbara told him that he was absurd, but she pinned a spray of pink flowers on his coat and looked earnestly into his gray-blue eyes alight with whimsical humor.

"Tell me," she said soberly, "would you have asked me this if—if nothing had happened, if things were just as you found them when you first came to Cresthills?"

"If I had known you as I have learned to know you now, Barbara, I should have wished to."

"But would you?" she insisted.

"It would have been merely a question of courage. Your millions frightened me, you know. In spite of all our bold, bad jesting on that subject, I suspect that neither Tivvy Winthrop nor I would ever care to be classed as fortune-hunters. We have tender consciences, Tivvy and I. But the blessed courts have made me bolder, haven't they? So why not let the millions go and take me instead? It's a poor bargain for you, I admit, but see what a lucky dog it makes of me!"

Barbara made a gesture of despair. "When you go back to your uncle, the earl, he may ask you about those uncouth Americans. You must tell him that some of them are very, very rich and tremendously haughty; also that some of them are very, very poor, and quite as proud as they are poor. Will you?"

"I shall tell him nothing of the kind. I shall say to the earl, 'Well, I've come back. I've been robbing America. Here's my loot.' Then I'll present you, Barbara."

"It will not be I."

"And why not?"

"Because by that time I shall be an assistant instructor of ancient history and higher mathematics at my old college. I have written to know if there was a place for me and they have offered me this. In two or three years I shall be wearing spectacles and contracting class-room nerves. I shall take a six-room cottage on a side street. Mother will keep house, Aunt Emily will probably go to live with an old housekeeper with whom she was always very friendly, and father will plant a garden for us and bring in the coal and wood. I have my future all planned, you see, and it does not include a visit to Kelvey Castle."

"Barbara, you are not in earnest about this, are you?" He tried to capture one of her hands, but she warded him off with the sweet peas.

"Oh, yes, I am," she declared.

"Then you have given up the ship—Cresthills, the fortune, and all that?"

"All. But I have not told mother. Let her hope while she may. And you must not trouble yourself with our sorry affairs any more, Mr. Cheltingham. You can do nothing, of course. The court has decided that the estate belongs to someone else. We must submit as gracefully as we can. I have been talking with Mr. Hicks about it, and Mr. Hicks, you know, has had a great deal of experience in courts."

"Hicks is an old croaker," growled Cheltingham.

"No, he is not. Mr. Hicks feels very badly about it. But he has seen a

great many similar cases tried in court and he says the wrong persons always get the property."

There was no combating such wisdom as this. Cheltingham regretted that he had not choked Hicks.

"Hicks," he said, with caustic emphasis, "is a wonder."

Barbara laughed at his vehemence. "Mr. Hicks is getting the horses ready to take you to the station," she responded.

"Barbara, will you drive down with us to see me off?" he suddenly asked.

"I—I think perhaps I had better not."

"Then will you give me a glove, or a handkerchief, or—or one of your apron strings? I am your knight, you know. I am going out to do battle with fierce lawyers, with the mighty monster of the law, with heaven knows what. I need a token to wear on my shield."

"You shall have another sweet-pea blossom," said Barbara.

He bore it away with him, waving it in mock solemnity as he departed. He might have carried it all the way to town had he not dropped it on the car seat while he lighted a cigar, and forgotten to pick it up again. But a certain wistful tenderness in Barbara's wonderful eyes he did not forget.

XI

ONCE in town Mr. Lawrence Cheltingham seemed to acquire a new personality. For a young man who had spent the summer with such apparent disregard of time and his own affairs, he suddenly became a very busy person and one of no small importance.

His first visit was to a bank, where he was smilingly received in a private office by a white-mustached official. Next he went to an ornate new hotel and installed himself quite luxuriously in an outside suite. At a fashionable tailoring establishment they bowed him an obsequious welcome and announced that his order had been given prompt attention. They arrayed him faultlessly. You might have noted

that the left sleeve of his topcoat bore a band of black cloth. He dined at an exclusive club and answered a cablegram which he found awaiting him.

If any of the guests from that unfortunate hotel remembered the frank-eyed young man, of the reddish hair and the infectious smile, who drove over every morning from Cresthills with delicious vegetables and creamy milk, it is doubtful that they would have identified him as the same individual who bowled down Fifth avenue in a hansom-cab and was finally deposited at the entrance to the downtown skyscraper wherein Messrs. Trent & Packham conducted their extensive law business. Certainly Mr. Trent did not suspect that his visitor had so recently handled milk-cans and green corn, for Mr. Trent greeted him with deferential courtesy. He declared that he was charmed to meet Mr. Cheltingham, that the note of introduction from Mr. Cheltingham's London solicitors had been received, and that the services of Trent & Packham were at his immediate disposal.

Mr. Cheltingham did not seem overwhelmed by this urbanity. He betrayed no surprise. There was just a twinkle of appreciation in his calm, audacious eyes.

"I've been commissioned by one of your clients, Mr. Trent, to haul you over the coals," observed Cheltingham drily. "The Redkirks, you know," and he presented Mrs. "Billy's" letter.

The urbanity of Mr. Trent's manner cooled perceptibly. He adjusted his eyeglasses, however, and read the letter.

"Well?" he said expectantly. "Fire away." He was a heavy, full-blooded person, one of those big, round-faced men whose freedom from indigestion gains them undeserved credit for good nature.

"We would like to know what has been done toward settling the case," said Cheltingham.

Mr. Trent smiled indulgently. He took off his eyeglasses and balanced

them on his forefinger, whirling them with gentle dexterity.

"We have asked for an appeal. The argument on that will be heard some time next month. If the appeal is granted we shall endeavor to have the case placed on the calendar in time for the next term. That," continued Mr. Trent placidly, "is the best we can do at present; at least, we so regard it. What would your friends suggest?"

"Don't you think it would be a good plan to look up this Mrs. Cuddyback-Redkirk? Who is she, anyway? How did she happen to have a will signed by old Jeremiah Redkirk? Did he actually sign it? If he didn't, who did? Where did Mrs. Cuddyback come from, and—and so on?" Cheltingham waved his stick vaguely.

Again Mr. Trent smiled, a smile of undisturbed self-satisfaction.

"We should be extremely obliged, Mr. Cheltingham, to anyone who would give us exact information on those very points. During the three years that the alleged Mrs. Jeremiah Redkirk has played the role of plaintiff in this interesting action we have endeavored to solve those problems without much success. We suspect that she has a past, perhaps a very highly colored past, but she seems to have shut the door upon it and thrown away the key. Also, we suspect that she is an impostor, most likely a forger. But"—here Mr. Trent gave the eyeglasses an extra twirl of emphasis—"suspicion is not evidence. Mrs. Cuddyback-Redkirk chooses to obscure her past in mystery. We are unable to trace either her origin or her progress. We have employed detectives, who failed to detect. We have advertised for relatives of the late Mr. Cuddyback. They have not appeared. But here is the lady herself. She says she is the widow, not only of Cuddyback, but more recently of Jeremiah Redkirk. She produces a marriage certificate, signed by a minister who has been dead for several years, and by a witness who cannot be found. She produces a will bearing

a convincing signature. The court renders a decision in her favor. And there you are!"

Had the affair related to Larry Cheltingham's personal fortunes he might have been satisfied with this. But now the British half of him was thoroughly aroused. The obstinacy which had caused him to leave the old earl, the tenacity of purpose which had almost starved him in Alaska and had made him the best forward of England's crack polo team, now led him to grin a stubborn response to Mr. Trent's deceptive smile.

Quite enthusiastically he proceeded to suggest several impossible and wholly impractical lines of activity. Why not kidnap the woman and frighten her into confessing forgery, perjury and other crimes? Could not the President be asked to interfere? Had they tried hypnotism on her? Had they tried appealing to her sense of justice?

"Why, do you know," he went on, "it's a confounded outrage! Think of it! There are the Redkirks—charming persons, most of them—accustomed to all the luxuries and refinements of wealth. And see what happens. An unknown woman bobs up, a common adventuress, and at one stroke robs them of everything. And this remarkable law system of yours says it is all right. It is a rank injustice, Mr. Trent. Do you realize what it means to such persons as the Redkirks to be deprived of their income in this fashion? How do you imagine they have been existing this summer?"

Mr. Trent had formed no theory as to this.

"By marketing vegetables and fruits and milk!" exclaimed Cheltingham dramatically.

"Very distressing," observed Mr. Trent calmly.

"But there must be some way of restoring their property to them. They can't go on in this way, you know. What are they to live on while the courts are getting ready to act?"

"The machinery of the law, Mr. Cheltingham, is notoriously slow to move. It is like the mills of the gods.

But we cannot change it." Here he plucked a sheaf of documents from a pigeonhole before him. "Sometimes the delay works injury to our clients, sometimes they profit, and—er—when there are any new developments in the case we—er—will send word."

The interview seemed to be at an end. Mr. Trent smiled an affable farewell as his visitor went out.

As Cheltingham climbed into his cab he felt very much like a knight who has broken a lance against a stone wall. Yet he could still chuckle a little at himself. He had cut rather a poor figure in the eyes of the great lawyer, and he knew it. But he had no regrets, no smarting vanity. In the course of his ride uptown he evolved another project. He was just considering its brilliancy when he caught sight of someone signaling excitedly at him from the sidewalk. It was Tivvy Winthrop, with a good deal to say and very little breath for the saying of it.

"Hang you, Larry," he panted, bolting into the hansom from the curb as the driver pulled up, "haven't you any eyes or ears! Been chasing you for a block, shouting like a huckster and making a holy show of myself, while you've been sitting here like a grinning idiot."

"It's you, is it, Tivvy? I thought I was being cheered by the populace. And what does the illustrious Tivvy think he is doing so far from home and mother?"

"What are *you* doing here? That's what I want to know. I supposed you were back at Kelvey long ago, rolling in clover and playing the grand."

"You've heard, then?"

"I haven't been in the woods. But where have you been and what have you been doing?"

"Tivvy," said Cheltingham solemnly, "you'd never believe the half of it, so I'll not tell you. I'll say this much, though; the law of this great Republic, where one man is just as good as another and a little better, the law and I are at odds. Just now the law has a shade the best of it."

"The deuce! You're not under bail, are you?"

"No, my dear Tivvy. It's the civil, not the criminal code, which is bothering me. I have been vicariously robbed. The case is very complex. If I should explain it would make your head ache."

Mr. Winthrop shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "Drop it, Larry! You know I never understand your beastly jokes. What's up?"

Cheltingham threw him an injured look. "Joke! It's nearer high tragedy. But come along with me and I'll show you a sample. I am now on my way to the residence of a person to whom I am indebted for much happiness and much grief. Let me see." Here he consulted an address-book and, lifting the roof-trap with his walking-stick, gave the driver a number. "That is where she lives, Tivvy," he added.

"You're in love, then?" continued Mr. Winthrop cynically.

Cheltingham sighed and regarded his cigar with sentimental gaze.

"See here," broke forth Tivvy, "you don't mean to drag me around with you on a spooning expedition, do you? Just leave me out of that, Larry, if it's all the same to you."

"Can't do it, my dear fellow. This is a very trying hour for me. I need your moral support, your tender sympathy. I may want to use you as a buffer, too. And here's the place."

The cabman had stopped before a house which was in no way different from its neighbors in the block save that the window boards, which proclaimed the summer abandonment of others, had been removed.

"Come along, Tivvy," said Cheltingham as he jumped out.

"But—but I don't know the lady."

"Unhappy youth! But now is the accepted time. Here, give me one of your cards."

Reluctantly Mr. Winthrop followed him up the brownstone steps. Un- easily he endured the long wait after the bell-button had been pushed,

Cheltingham's hand resting detainingly on his sleeve. Finally they heard the inner vestibule door unlocked, and then the outer one was opened about four inches, the length of the guard-chain with which it was fitted. A scowling maid inspected them with suspicious eyes.

"For Mrs. Cuddyback," said Cheltingham, handing their cards through the crack. After a moment of hesitation the maid disappeared.

"A widow!" exclaimed Winthrop under his breath.

"Why not?" demanded Cheltingham.

"Cuddyback? Cuddyback?" Mr. Winthrop whispered the name interrogatively.

"Romantic name, isn't it?"

Before Mr. Winthrop could answer, the door was once more opened on the guard-chain, and they were conscious that from the gloom within they were undergoing another scrutiny. It was not what might be termed a cordial reception, but after a moment more they were asked to step in. Tivvy Winthrop was perplexed and mystified, but Cheltingham seemed not at all disturbed.

If Mr. Winthrop had formed any clear notion as to why his friend should select the unconventional hour of high noon for making an Avenue call it was quickly dispelled. One glance at the stout, middle-aged person in the untidy purple dressing-gown was quite sufficient to tell him that his first conclusion was wrong—or else Larry had completely lost his senses. Doubtless she had been attractive once, but never had she been the kind of woman who would have interested Larry Cheltingham.

She was half reclining in a big, leather-covered library chair. On a mahogany tabourette at her elbow were glasses, a siphon of soda, a decanter, cigarettes and a paper-covered "Ouida" novel. Her method of enjoying August in town was obvious, and she was at no pains to conceal it. She was examining their cards.

"Well, what is it?" she asked

promptly, looking from one to the other with impassive self-possession.

Cheltingham bowed suavely to indicate himself as spokesman.

"My friend, Mr. Winthrop," he began, "has the misfortune to have suffered the loss of speech and hearing. He is a deaf-mute." Here he paused to glance with melancholy solicitude at Tivvy. Mr. Winthrop gasped and turned pink to his ear-tips. "He has asked me, madam," continued Cheltingham brazenly, "to explain the object of his visit. I trust we do not intrude?"

"You'd better sit down," responded the stout person calmly, indicating some linen-draped chairs, but not committing herself to a formal welcome. "Now you can go ahead."

Mr. Winthrop studied the inside of his hat and meditated revenge. Cheltingham rested his stick across his knees and leaned comfortably back as if thoroughly at ease. So he was, for the moment. He experienced the creative thrill of the artist, the exhilaration of the bold skater who skims recklessly across thin ice. He had seized the inspiration of the instant and was plunging blindly ahead.

"I presume," he went on, "that you have heard the late Mr. Cuddyback mention Mr. Winthrop's name."

"Well?" She was an extremely non-communicative person.

"But even if you did, you may have forgotten. Mr. Cuddyback, I understand, has been deceased for—for—is it eight or ten years?"

"Suppose you call it ten," she suggested.

"Ah, of course! Ten, to be sure. And you were living then in—in—" Cheltingham seemed to be trying to spur his memory by rolling his cane back and forth over his knees. He made another start. "Let's see, you were living then——"

"Yes, I *was* living then. Go on." She seemed to be extracting a certain alert satisfaction from the situation.

"It's of no consequence, of course," admitted Cheltingham, "where you *were* living. The point is this—Mr.

Winthrop became acquainted with the late Mr. Cuddyback through their business relations and——"

"Did he?" Mrs. Cuddyback seemed interested. "What kind of business?" she demanded.

"Why—er—well, I don't think Mr. Winthrop ever mentioned it. But it doesn't matter. He——"

"Ask him now," said Mrs. Cuddyback peremptorily.

Cheltingham hesitated not a moment. On the back of an envelope he scribbled: "Think of something, Tivvy. Think hard," and passed it to his mute friend. In a moment Tivvy handed back the envelope. He had inscribed this helpful sentiment: "Go to the devil."

Cheltingham beamed and brightened. "Ah, yes! My friend was selling a subscription-edition of Dante's 'Inferno.' He was a book-agent."

"It's a pity all book-agents were not deaf and dumb," said Mrs. Cuddyback grimly.

"But he wasn't then," hastily corrected Cheltingham. "That came afterward—from a fever. A sad case, madam, for he is rather a bright young man, in spite of his appearance. He does not sell books now, of course. He has lately inherited a fortune from a favorite aunt. And that brings me to my point. Now, it is a whim of Mr. Winthrop to place flowers on the graves of all his departed friends. It almost amounts to a passion with him. Mr. Cuddyback was one of his friends. He did him a very good turn once; I've forgotten just what it was, but Winthrop hasn't. He says he shall never feel quite satisfied until he has paid this tender tribute to the memory of your late husband. He fairly dragged me here and insisted that I beg your permission for him to do this. So I came."

Cheltingham folded his arms triumphantly, smiling blandly on the stout person in the purple dressing-gown, and waited for an outpouring of detailed confidences concerning the late Cuddyback.

Mrs. Cuddyback smiled, too, but not

confidingly. She surveyed Cheltingham with an amused air. She swept Tivvy with a critical glance. Then she yawned and picked up her "Ouida."

"All right," she observed. "You tell your friend that he's welcome to put as many flowers as he wants to on Cuddyback's grave."

"Ah, but don't you see, Mrs. Cuddyback, he doesn't know where the grave is!"

"Don't he? Well, neither do I." Then she looked Cheltingham squarely in the eyes and grinned.

Cheltingham led the retreat. It was panicky, almost a rout, for the inspiration had petered out. As they got into the cab he saw a grimacing maid leering after them.

"Tivvy," said Cheltingham earnestly, "as an amateur detective, I'm a failure."

"You're an ass," said Mr. Winthrop feelingly.

"That's mere prejudice of yours. You know we never could agree on that subject. But I'll forgive you this once, since I am so deeply in your debt."

But Mr. Winthrop was indignant. "Deaf and dumb book-agent!" he snorted. "Flowers on graves! By thunder, Cheltingham, that's carrying the thing too far!"

"I know it, Tivvy," cheerfully assented Cheltingham. "I owe you an apology, an explanation and a luncheon. Which will you have first?"

The luncheon appealed to Mr. Winthrop, so they drove to a club. The explanation lasted through the coffee. It explained everything save Barbara, whose name was somehow omitted. Hence Tivvy shook his head and failed to understand why Cheltingham should take such a deep interest in the Redkirk misfortunes.

"It—it isn't quite dignified, you know, Larry," he protested, "getting mixed up with such persons as that Cuddyback woman."

"You're right," admitted Cheltingham. "Neither is there much dignity in a hot scrimmage for a goal; and that is what I've started out to do for the Redkirks—make a goal."

"Your drive seems to have been blocked."

"You've stated the case, Tivvy. But the game isn't over."

Mr. Winthrop smiled at the familiar slogan. How often had he heard it on the side lines of a polo field between periods! That was Larry all over. He was never beaten until after the last stroke, and he would play a scrub match with the same ginger that he put into an international trophy tournament.

After luncheon Winthrop decoyed him to a steamship office. Tivvy was engaging a passage home.

"Better book one for yourself, Larry. They'll let you have it if you pay in advance," he suggested.

"Shut up," growled Cheltingham, for the home-hunger was awakening within him.

They drove aimlessly for an hour, smoking in sociable silence and watching the people. A jeweler's window, glittering with costly trinkets, caught Cheltingham's eye.

"Let's go in and buy things," he said impetuously. Almost before Tivvy knew it a salesman was spreading rings and necklaces on a velvet pad for their inspection.

"Something for the Widow Cuddyback, eh?" asked Tivvy maliciously.

"Blessed if I know," said Cheltingham. "But I'm going to buy, anyway. I'll begin with you. Will you have cuff-buttons, or a gold cigarette-case, or silver-mounted brushes?"

"I'll chuck 'em at your head if you do," retorted Mr. Winthrop.

"But I've a disgraceful balance at the bank, Tivvy."

"It's no affair of mine."

"You're an unfeeling brute, Tivvy. Look at that sunburst there. Think of the fun it would be to give that to someone. And there isn't a woman in the world to whom I'd dare offer it. Tivvy, I'm bound to give somebody something. I must. Haven't you an idea in your head? Don't you know some undeserving chap who would be tickled to death to present that thing to his best girl?"

The salesman smiled discreetly.

"There's a porter at my hotel who might do," said Mr. Winthrop reflectively. "I caught him walking off with my best umbrella the other day, and he confessed that he only meant to give it to Miss Maggie Ryan, a fascinating chambermaid on the fifth floor. He's a lovelorn villain. Is that the kind you're looking for?"

"Lovely!" exclaimed Cheltingham. "Maggie gets the sunburst."

He would have bought it, too, had not Tivvy firmly declined to be party to such idiocy. So they compromised on a flashy ring, set with a big, off-color turquoise and pearls.

"It isn't exactly what I would like to do, but it makes me feel a little better," said Cheltingham as he dropped his friend at a hotel entrance. "Tell your porter it's an offering laid on the shrine of unrequited love."

"I'm beginning to believe you, Larry. If it would be any relief you may come in and tell me about her. I can stand half an hour of it, old man."

"It's kind of you, Tivvy, but I haven't the right to say a word. So long! I'll look you up again tomorrow."

He failed to do so, however. He spent the entire evening in the composition of a letter which was never finished and never sent. It was meant for Barbara. In the morning he started for Cresthills.

XII

"THE Ivingses are at Bar Harbor again," announced Mrs. "Billy" from behind the pages of a newspaper. "They gave a dinner in honor of the French ambassador last week, which means that they are planning on Washington this winter, I suppose. And I see that the *Lady Gray* is reported at Cannes. That's the Dickinsons' yacht, you know, Emily. I wonder who they have with them this summer. The Thayer-Braytons are to spend September in Scotland. Now who can have asked them to Scotland?"

Aunt Emily made no response. In spite of the well-intentioned little breeze which wandered up from the Sound to flutter the yellow and white awnings, the noonday atmosphere of the Cresthills drawing-room was conducive to nap-taking. Aunt Emily was thus engaged.

Mrs. "Billy," however, was too deeply absorbed to notice that her audience was no longer attentive.

"Mrs. Brockley," she continued, "was one of the patronesses of the Lenox flower festival. There are some rather nice people at Lenox this year. Mr. Mortimer Monks had two entries in the Morristown horse show. One of them was given a blue ribbon—a pair of hackneys. I wanted Billy to send our cobs there last season, you remember. Who do you guess is at Saratoga, Emily?"

Still there was no reply. Mrs. "Billy" lowered the newspaper to discover that her sister-in-law was sleeping placidly. Then she remembered. Aunt Emily had long since lost her interest in the doings of persons whom she knew but slightly, even though they might be among those who really counted. Mrs. "Billy" sighed resignedly and resumed her reading.

The daily society column was the last slender thread which connected her with a former remote existence. To this thread she still clung. As your inveterate whist-player will sit shuffling the cards long after the game has broken up, so Mrs. "Billy" handled caressingly these well-thumbed bits of social gossip. She was still musing over them when Cheltingham arrived from the city.

"What success?" she cried eagerly.

Then for the first time he realized how unshaken was her faith in ultimate victory. Instantly he decided that he could not tell her of his utter failure.

"There's nothing definite as yet," he said evasively. "In fact, I suppose I made rather a mess of things. I blundered about like a bull in a china shop. But I've seen your Mr. Trent."

"And stirred him up to investigate that woman?"

"I mentioned that, and I asked about the appeal. He says it will be slow work."

"I expect it will be. Still, I hope to have it all settled before Thanksgiving. We must be in town when the season opens, you know."

Cheltingham recalled the glimpse he had taken of the Redkirks' city home and of its present tenant. He was thankful that Mrs. "Billy" did not know. After that he trusted himself to say but little on the subject of the will case.

"Where is Miss Barbara?" he asked.

"Oh, Barbara has gone back to that poky little college town for a day or two. She is seeing some professors about something or other."

"Ah!" Cheltingham understood. Barbara was engaging that six-room cottage and preparing to elucidate higher mathematics.

Somehow Cresthills suddenly appeared to have lost its charm for him. An hour ago he had been in a great hurry to get there. The train could not carry him fast enough. But now the place seemed singularly vacant.

He wandered out on the veranda, seeking shade and solitude, only to run across Erastus Hicks dozing comfortably in a porch rocker with his heels on the rail.

Hicks was glad to see him. He said so several times. He shook his hand as if Cheltingham had been a long-lost brother. Things had been rather dull without him, Mr. Hicks declared.

"D'ye know, Mr. Cheltingham, I've come to think a lot of you," confided Mr. Hicks genially. "We didn't exactly hit it off at first, you and me. Guess I took you for one of those stiff, pig-headed Englishmen. But I take it all back. English or not, you're the kind of man I like."

Cheltingham was inclined to laugh at this frank declaration of approval, but he kept a straight face and assured Mr. Hicks that he was glad to hear of it. He valued the good will

of Mr. Hicks, so he asserted, and returned the sentiment.

Nevertheless, Cheltingham could not help wishing that Hicks would go off into another doze. But Mr. Hicks was very much awake now. He seemed bent on conversation. Presently it became evident that he wanted to say something in particular, but found difficulty in making a proper introduction of the topic. Having ventured one or two false openings, he cleared his throat noisily and remarked, quite irrelevant to any previous discussion:

"It's this getting married that makes most of the trouble for us men."

"You don't approve of matrimony, eh?" queried Cheltingham, a little amused.

"Oh, it's all right if it isn't done in a hurry. But it's a serious thing, picking out a wife. It's so all-fired easy to make a mistake. Now, a man don't buy a house or build one unless he's thought a lot about it beforehand, found out all the particulars and used his reason. He's careful and particular, for he expects to live in that house the rest of his life, perhaps. It's got to be just suited to him; not too big, not too small. But he's just as likely to rush off and get married, when he reaches a certain age, as he is to sit down to his next meal. And how does he pick out a wife? Just by her looks! Yes, sir, in nine cases out of ten he don't think of anything else but the color of her eyes or the way she wears her hair, or maybe it's only a bit of pink in her cheeks."

"But how would you pick out a wife, Mr. Hicks?"

"Me? I wouldn't dare try—again."

"Oh, then you have tried—and it didn't turn out well?"

Mr. Hicks shook his head dolefully. "No one ever made a worse botch of it. Her eyes captured me. Most remarkable eyes you ever saw, sir. I couldn't think of anything else for weeks. Her family wasn't much; father a town loafer, mother took in washing. I was clerking in a grocery store then and planning to have a business of my own some day. I might

have married the boss's daughter, too, and stepped right into his shoes. But no! I couldn't see anything but that girl's eyes. I asked her one night, and we were married the next day. We hung together about two years. When she ran off I was mighty glad to find she'd gone. She was a beauty, though."

Mr. Hicks sighed reminiscently. "Just spoiled me," he continued. "I lost my place and began to drift from one thing to another, never sticking long at anything. I was on the police force for awhile, and from that I got to know something about court business and politics. Now I'm a deputy, which isn't bad while cases are plenty. But when I lose my pull there's no knowing what I'll have to do next. All because I married in haste. Mr. Cheltingham, don't you ever marry a young woman just because she's pretty to look at."

A good-humored chuckle came from Cheltingham. "There's no immediate danger," he said.

Mr. Hicks wagged his head dissentingly. "That'll do to tell a man with no eyes."

"Eh!" exclaimed Cheltingham. Unexpectedly the discussion had taken a personal turn. "What do you mean?"

"Now, look here, Mr. Cheltingham, if I didn't think a thundering lot of you I'd never open my head. But I do, as you know. I ain't going to mention any names, understand, but when I see two young folks who don't look at each other nor speak for a whole day at a time, and then see the same young folks the next day go mooning off by themselves and making up for lost time—when I see signs like that, I say, I know what's coming; not mentioning, as I said, any names at all."

Cheltingham made no response. Once more the conversation lapsed and there was silence.

"Her name was Julia," said Mr. Hicks, who had a curious habit of omitting all introductory remarks. "The last I heard of her she'd married one of them race-track bookmakers. That

was the third or fourth after me, I ain't sure which."

"Then you were divorced?" suggested Cheltingham, by way of exhibiting toward the much-married Julia an interest he did not feel.

"No," said Mr. Hicks in a matter-of-fact way. "I never took the trouble to get a divorce, and I guess Julia didn't think it worth while. She knew I wouldn't bother her. Two of the others were paying her alimony the last I knew. Julia Cuddyback, she called herself then."

"Julia Cuddyback! Did you say Cuddyback?" demanded Cheltingham, suddenly straightening in his chair and staring hard at Mr. Hicks.

"Yes, Cuddyback. Queer name, ain't it?"

"Was she a large, stout woman?"

"Julia was a pretty sizable woman."

"With snapping black eyes?"

"Most remarkable black eyes. They could snap all right at times, too."

"It's the very one! She wears a purple dressing-gown with stains up and down the front."

Mr. Hicks declined to indorse this detail.

"But she does," insisted Cheltingham. "And you say she was never divorced?"

"Yes, she's been divorced—twice that I know of, and perhaps more'n that—but not from me."

"Hicks!" exclaimed Cheltingham, thumping the deputy enthusiastically on the back, "you're an angel! Do you want to know where your Julia is now?" Mr. Hicks glanced furtively about. "She's living in the Redkirks' town house and posing as the widow of old Jeremiah Redkirk."

"That would be just like Julia," commented Mr. Hicks imperturbably.

"But don't you understand, Hicks? She's the woman who claims the whole of this estate—Cresthills, all the money and everything else. And she's as good as got it, too."

Slowly the sluggish consciousness of Erastus Hicks encompassed the dimensions of this surprising discovery.

"Julia!" he whispered huskily. "Is she the one?"

"There's no doubt of it."

Mr. Hicks seemed dazed for a moment. Then one illuminating fact blazed forth in his bewildered brain.

"And—and I'm just a deputy, a hired watchman for her property! Well, I'll be cussed!"

"But it will not be hers long, Hicks. Why, you can knock her case into a cocked hat! The will she's banking on is drawn in favor of Mrs. Jeremiah Redkirk, who doesn't exist. Don't you see, man? When you are produced in court with the record of your marriage, she becomes Mrs. Hicks, Mrs. Erastus J. Hicks; and her cake is all dough."

"Think so?"

"It's as certain as fate!"

Mr. Hicks grinned. "I guess here's where I even things up with Julia."

That same day Messrs. Hicks and Cheltingham departed for the city on urgent and mysterious business. They went straight to the offices of Trent & Packham.

Mr. Trent did not slap Mr. Hicks on the back. He did not speak of him as an angel. He did say, however, after due consideration, that the possession of such evidence as Mr. Hicks had been kind enough to furnish put the affair in an entirely new light. It was just possible that the claimant might wish to compromise. It would be greatly to her advantage to do so for, as matters now stood, she would not only be liable to lose all the property, but might be indicted on criminal charges which would land her in State's prison. Mr. Trent would see what the opposing counsel had to say.

They were astute lawyers, the gentlemen of the opposition. Having learned that Mrs. Cuddyback was really Mrs. Erastus J. Hicks and had been for some twenty years, they hastened to practice the fundamental principle of the legal profession—that is, they took steps to insure the future ability of their client to pay counsel fees. They advised Mrs. Cuddyback to settle and drop out of sight as quickly as possible.

But Mrs. Julia Hicks-Cuddyback-

etc., entrenched behind all the solid opulence of the Redkirks' Fifth avenue house, proved to be balky. Settle for a few paltry thousands! Not she! She would fight to the bitter end.

This, however, was before she had been confronted, in the office of her own attorneys, by the stern-visaged Mr. Hicks.

It was an interesting, if not a touching reunion. She had discarded the purple dressing-gown for a somewhat gorgeous costume which revealed the ample fulness of her figure with more or less art. Her presence was almost imposing.

The reappearance of her abandoned and probably forgotten mate must have been like a bursting bomb under the tall towers of her ambition. Yet she never flinched. With calm scorn she scrutinized Mr. Hicks, making her leisurely survey by the aid of a gold-handled lorgnette.

"Ah, Erastus!" There was languid curiosity rather than surprise in her tone. "Haven't improved much in looks, have you? That bald spot doesn't add to your beauty. Eyes just as prominent as ever, too. So you've taken to dyeing your mustache? That is not altogether a bad sign; but you should put it on closer to the roots, Erastus."

Then, forcing a harsh laugh, she turned to the others, indicated Mr. Hicks with a wave of the lorgnette, and exclaimed:

"And to think—once upon a time I married *that*!"

Erastus, however, conscious that he held the centre of the stage and the balance of power, glared a defiant response. He refused to wilt.

"You've done a lot of marrying since then, haven't you, Julia?" he retorted. It was, perhaps, the most brilliant sally of his career.

"Take him away!" commanded Mrs. Cuddyback imperiously.

Mr. Hicks hastily retired to the rear. "They are an inconvenience, these surplus husbands," suggested Mr. Trent, "especially when one is establishing a claim to widowhood."

"Never mind all that," snapped Mrs. Cuddyback. "Let's get down to business."

There followed lengthy arguments by the attorneys on both sides, and an interesting exchange of legal phraseology, through which Mrs. Cuddyback sat serene and unmoved.

Her triumph was great as, after further sharp controversy, she sailed majestically out of the room, a claimant no longer, but well satisfied that she had been one.

Mr. Hicks blinked after her, speechless. When he recovered his voice he confided to Cheltingham:

"She's a wonderful woman, eh?"

XIII

VARIOUSLY at Cresthills did the news affect the different persons whom it most concerned. Mr. William Redkirk wrung the hand of the modestly blushing Mr. Hicks. He almost embraced Cheltingham. He lighted a cigar, threw back his shoulders, and inhaled a deep breath of relief.

"We pulled through, didn't we, Edith?" he demanded of his wife.

Aunt Emily promptly snatched off an apron she was wearing, marched to the kitchen, handed it gingerly to Mary and said vindictively, "Burn it!"

For the first time in many weeks Mrs. "Billy's" chin was up. Her eyes were turned toward the north and she seemed to be gazing at some distant object. Perhaps she was seeing again those frowning, tall, spiked gates. A rekindled fire blazed in her brilliant eyes.

"I have felt all along that it must come back to us," she said, "and now that it has I mean to live the kind of life I was meant for. I don't belong in the background. I know, because I have tried being there. I am going to the front. It isn't that I envy anyone, or despise anyone, either. But I am weary of just looking on. I want to lead. I think I could do it as well as those who do. I feel that I was born

for it. I don't want to follow. I want to be one of those who lead. I am going to try, anyway."

Mrs. "Billy" had no thought of talking vainly or boastfully. She was stating her creed. And, as Mrs. "Billy" said it, it sounded quite as impressive as other creeds which profess loftier ideals.

"Good enough, Edith!" exclaimed Billy Redkirk. "I'm ready for almost anything, so long as it isn't gardening. I've done enough of that this summer to last me a lifetime."

This, too, in its way, was more or less of a creed.

Meanwhile Barbara and Larry Cheltingham had gone out. Singularly enough, they sought the carved marble seat in the imitation Italian garden, the scene of their first conversation.

They had much to say to each other. More than that, a good deal of it seemed to need repetition. For example, Barbara found it necessary to declare several times that to Cheltingham they owed the recovery of their fortune.

"Me!" he would say. "Nonsense! Hicks is the hero of the hour. All hail to Hicks! You should have heard him engage in repartee with the Cuddyback person."

"But it was you who discovered Mr. Hicks."

"Hicks discovered himself."

"We shall always be grateful to you," insisted Barbara, "not only for this but for the noble, unselfish way in which you stood by us."

"Ah, at last!" exclaimed Cheltingham, with exaggerated fervor. Then he removed his hat and with his forefinger described a circle around his head. "It's there, isn't it?" he demanded.

Barbara could see only some reddish brown locks which were a little longer than most men would want them, and which curled at the ends.

"The halo, I mean," he explained. "A little faint, perhaps, but you can see it, can't you?"

Then she saw in his blue-gray eyes that whimsical audacity which she had

first noted with such scorn. She had no thought of being scornful now.

"I almost believe you deserve a halo, anyway," she admitted, with a laugh.

"Glory be! I've made many a wild promise to myself, but that's the first one I ever kept. Barbara, will you call me St. Larry after this?"

It was a most frivolous conversation, you see, and it continued as such until he managed to give it a tender and intimate tone. Once more, as he had under the big elm, he told Barbara all about it. Again she turned away and was silent. For several moments he waited, his heart sinking lower each instant, until he was almost on the black brink of despair. Then his blood bounded wildly. He noticed that she had reached one of her hands back to him. Eagerly he seized it. It was not withdrawn.

Half an hour later—although it might have been an hour, for that matter—he abruptly broke a sentence in half to announce:

"It shall be at Kelvey Castle, Barbara. There's no better place in the world for honeymooning. We'll spend it there."

"But," objected Barbara, lifting her head from his shoulder the better to look into his eyes, "I thought you were not on good terms with your uncle, the earl?"

"My uncle stopped being an earl more than a month ago, rest his soul."

"Oh!" said Barbara. "Then it is your cousin who——?"

"No. Wilton was the earl for two days and never knew it. Long before the news reached India he had managed to get himself shot with a tiger rifle. So it's my father who is Earl of Kelvey, and there'll never be a better."

"Your father! He is——?"

"Yes," said Cheltingham; "but you can't take back what you have said to me, Barbara, even if he is. Perhaps, too, you will be sorry for some of the bad things you've said against earls when you get to know him. If you're not I shall lock you up in the tower until you are."

Barbara smiled up at him. Then, after a thoughtful moment:

"Why did you not tell me before?"

"And have you turn me off the place for my pains! You thought it was bad enough when I was only the nephew of one."

"But now you will be an earl yourself some day, I suppose?"

"Let's hope that it will not be for a long, long time."

"And what is it that I must call you, Lawrence, when you are?"

"Just Larry. But please begin to do it now, Barbara."

XIV

No doubt you can recall the affair. St. Matthew's-the-Divine was transformed into a veritable tropical grove for the occasion. Ten truck-loads of palms are said to have been used in the chancel alone. The floral piece which screened the reading-desk was seven feet square. It represented the arms of Kelvey, done in vari-colored chrysanthemums. A duplicate of it blazed bravely in the Redkirks' city home.

The pews were no more than half occupied, it is true, although Mrs. "Billy" had sent cards to hundreds; but forty big policemen had their hands full to hold in check the mob of curious women who pushed, begged and implored for the privilege of "just one glimpse" at the noble heir to Kelvey and his fair bride.

For Mrs. "Billy" was stage-manager and master of ceremonies. From summoning the bishop to the selection of the ushers—and one of them was the smartest cotillion leader in town—she directed every detail. Considering all things, she worked marvels. She began by announcing that it was to be a severely simple, strictly private wedding. All publicity was to be avoided. So the representatives of the Sunday editions clamored for facts. Mrs. "Billy" took them into camp and, somehow, they were successful. The double-page articles which prepared the public for the coming ceremony were illuminated, not only with portraits

of the principals, but with pictures of the bridal gown, views of Kelvey Castle and reproductions of the Kelvey crest. Even Billy Redkirk, attired in hunting clothes, was pictured. In one column was traced the growth of the Redkirk millions, in another was recorded how the earldom of Kelvey was established and the manner in which all the previous earls had lived and died.

Fortunately for Barbara's peace of mind she never saw the more flamboyant accounts. Cheltenham did, however, and chuckled. He had divined Mrs. "Billy's" intentions from the start, but he allowed her to have her own way without protest.

Among those who vowed they would not go was Mrs. Dickinson. But she was there. If she had not forgotten her fumigation in the Valeburg town hall she had at least forgiven. She joined the crush at the reception.

"I am counting on you for my dinner dances, my dear," she told Mrs. Redkirk.

Mrs. "Billy" smiled. "It's sweet of you, but we are to spend most of the season in London. We've taken the Marquis of Dillington's house—to be near Barbara, you know. So sorry. Hope you come over."

Thus it happened, after all, that Mrs. "Billy" did not knock timidly at those frowning gates. She did not achieve Newport. It was Newport that achieved her. Somewhere between that September and the following July Mrs. "Billy" Redkirk, of Cresthills, disappeared. But in due time there arrived in Newport, straight from the Court of St. James, a gracious, confident personage, whose advent was heralded by a fine salvo of social trumpets.

"Ah-h-h!" they whispered. "The mother of the new Countess of Kelvey! She's all the rage, you know."



THE CELESTIAL CHILD

THERE is a quiet room in heaven
 Where childless women sit;
 And ever at the fall of even
 The dear Christ enters it,
 Not as the glorious Lord of light,
 Nor crowned with that effulgence bright
 By which the world is lit.

But as a little child, alone,
 He nestles at their feet,
 And each one calls the babe her own—
 Oh, it is wondrous sweet!
 The Christ's dear mother sits apart
 And smiles to hear each lonely heart
 With mother-rapture beat.

CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH WELLS.



DEAD men tell no tales, but they leave a lot of anecdotes after them.

JAMES STILES, WIDOWER

By Gertrude Lynch

JAMES STILES—Styles in later life—had a face plain as his name and a manner as plain as both. There was a certain sureness about all three, however, which won him many friends. He had the easy popularity of the negative virtues, he was a good listener, rarely had a pressing engagement when you wanted him for something else, and never spoke ill of anyone. Added to these he had a number of other admirable qualities, good to have in the house, which do not, however, raise the possessor to any *n*th power of success in the race for fame where an overweight of anything, even perfection, is apt to handicap the owner thereof.

Men inhaling dry breaths through pipe-stems and women damp ones over tea-cups were accustomed to say, in a phrase of approval, amazement or laudation, "I don't know why it is, James don't seem to stand for much, but I like him."

Naturally, having a mind tuned to commercial matters, through inheritance, predilection and habit, coming to his heirship of roll-top desk as surely as another man does to brush and palette, he eschewed his own kind in hours of recreation and sought bohemia for relaxation, a refined, upper caste of bohemia where people did real things and admired without stint—their own work and, incidentally, that of others.

James, having done nothing momentous himself except gain a modest livelihood in a modest way, admired all. He kept no reserve of superlative, but, like the widow's cruse of oil, his praise was ready for any emergency whether that happened to be a new

book, an embryotic landscape, an equestrian statue of General Washington or a brochure on love, lavender and languor, the Fortunatus stock of the modern poet.

One time in midwinter James became aware that the special firmament in which his orbit was so diplomatically placed that it did not interfere with the erratic ones of his companions was much agitated over the coming visit of an heiress who was heralded by that reputation for beauty and wit which is awarded so universally and generously to the feminine possessor of this world's goods.

When James saw her first at the studio reception given in her honor he envied at a distance. Men of merit were there, and he had a way of effacing himself at such times, feeling his incompetence to cope with those toward whom he had a mission of admiration, not of rivalry. The heiress was rosy in cheek and gown, the lamp-lights shaded to a dim radiance softened angularities, and her wit, if neither one- nor two-edged, needed no such polishing, for nearly any turn of speech passes muster coming from the lips of reputed millions.

Men came, saw, did homage and before making place for the successor had each a special word of explanation and praise of his own achievement, more or less coated with humility. One had weary publishers waiting for his approval before the proof-sheets of an *édition de luxe* were sent to press; another was about to sign a contract for which every sculptor in the land had competed; his model, dragged from obscurity at a moment's notice

and sent at the last gasp, outranking all; there was a third who had painted miniatures of all the royal families of Europe during a summer vacation; and a poet whose picture as a professional beauty outranked his Omarian quatrains in popularity. The latter recited his famous stanza, "To You," his eyes saying what his lips dared not, that he had a presentiment of her existence before her creation.

She was deeply impressed by all, almost too deeply for comfort. In her retired home she had longed for the time when she should meet genius face to face, but, if the truth must be told, she had not expected to find it quite so self-engrossed, so fatiguing.

A wave of ongoing humanity brought James Stiles to her in spite of himself, brought him and left him stranded there.

"And what do you do?" the heiress asked, gazing expectantly into his face.

He hesitated, feeling himself at a disadvantage; then the power of an habitual sincerity forced the words from his lips. He spoke them shamefacedly but sturdily: "I am plain James Stiles, in the coal business."

Three months later, "plain James Stiles, in the coal business" and the heiress were married. Like many of her over-advertised kind, the heiress turned out to be a very modest-looking little person in the uncompromising light of day, and the fortune with which she had been credited amounted to a few thousands, which she lost on entering the united state, according to the will of a spinster aunt who had never been able to read the Creator's mission in afflicting humanity with what she considered an unnecessary sex.

From a person of unimportance, the marriage ceremony changed James Stiles into a man of some distinction. His was a dual life, a commonplace individuality amid commonplace associations, with hours of recreation in a crowd of celebrities, to whom his mediocrity was as refreshing as undecorated wall-paper after the serpentine decorations of an *art nouveau* interior.

His family and business associates had looked askance at these inroads into bohemia, believing that nothing but ill would come of such a connection. But even the most skeptical could find no weak point to criticize when, as benedick, he displayed an unfailing regularity at his dinner-hour, never spent the evening away from home except when his wife was with him, visited neglected relatives with more and more frequency as time went on, and spoke loudly and often of his new-found happiness.

His friends of the other world witnessed his gradual withdrawal from them with disappointment. They could have spared a greater man with less regret. Occasionally he would reappear at some special function, his wife on his arm, an expression of beatitude on his face. Their eyes never wandered far from each other's glance. If one made a statement the other corroborated it. They usually left early, with a home-sweet-home tone to their farewells.

Good husbands, like poets, are born, not made; but it must be confessed that James Stiles enjoyed the distinction his devotion caused. Hitherto he had been overlooked or reproached by his family, an umbrella for the rainy days of his famous and forgetful friends.

It was a distinction which had little competition and its rarity made it emphatic. The small bump of egotism in his phrenological make-up, which had been reduced to a flat surface in the presence of celebrity, began to assume normal proportions. As another might talk of his book, his statue, his painting, he spoke of his wife, his domestic life, his certain path to declining years through a peaceful valley.

His relatives listened to him as those historical persons must have listened to the prodigal son descanting on the taste of home cooking, with dry husks in mind for comparison. Bohemia, where fame and fortune camp out one day and are gone the next, listened with equal interest, the picture of the married life of one of their number

representing to all the others the single sure and stable thing in a shifting landscape. It resurrected early resolutions and awakened hopes of a later and better life when rheumatism and the ingrowing soul should demand attention.

It is said that everyone has a talent for some particular thing, if it can but be discovered. James Stiles had stumbled on his by chance; he had a talent for being married, and this talent was approved and commended as talent unalloyed ever is, even in a captious and cynical world.

Then the unexpected occurred. Mrs. Stiles, young, vital, with no thought of the morrow, took cold. The warning was neglected, as those who are unused to illness neglect the beginnings of a physical collapse. Her cold rapidly developed into something more serious, and all at once, without a word of farewell, with no time to prepare for the inevitable, James Stiles became a widower.

After the first moments of wrestling with his grief, he sent for his relatives, who responded with alacrity to his summons. They found him speechless; a red-eyed, back-bent man, who groped blindly for their hands and shoulders, and shook his head in assent at every suggestion made to him in respect to post-mortem arrangements.

Later, when his voice returned, he went over and over, to each in turn, specially chosen for the moment's confidence, an account of the happiness of his married life and particularly of those last days when he had no suspicion of the end. He seemed never weary of these reminiscences and his relatives showed no sign of boredom, fearful that indifference might send him in despair to his scapegrace friends who, in their turn, waited on him loyally, attended the funeral in a body, sent flowers and overwhelmed him with invitations, recipes for "getting away from himself," or wrote him letters of advice on this subject when he refused to listen to verbal suggestions.

After the funeral, James spent a

long time in seclusion, having taken his wife's body to her girlhood home in a far Western town, where it was rumored that for the first time he was reveling in the scenes of her childhood and early youth, writing a poetical obituary and designing a gravestone.

On his return he moved into a small bachelor apartment, taking with him various personal adornings, articles of intrinsic and sentimental worth which had about them the aureole of his wife's accustomed use.

Hither came a steady stream of visitors to relieve his lonely hours from the weight of a pressing sorrow. Even those who had drifted away from him in his benedick days felt it incumbent upon them now that he should not sink into melancholia. It became quite the custom for carriages with freights destined for dinners, balls or receptions to stop at James's *en route* for a half-hour or so. Relatives' houses were opened to him at all times; certain rooms in them were now spoken of as set aside for "Poor James," and extra plates were laid at the tables, ever ready for his unannounced appearance.

His mourning was deep as the grief it represented; his hat was but a brim on a crape tower; his clothes ebony without its luster. One of his maiden aunts had discovered a bunch of artificial curls, the property of the deceased, and from these a mourning-ring and chain were made; his scarfpin was a black pearl presented by a coterie of friends to whom his assistance in moments of financial interrogation had ever been ready. Dressed for an outing, he looked like a Personified Sorrow stalking in a crystal maze of doubt.

For many months he refused all invitations except quiet dinners in the family, to the third and fourth removed. The friends who came to relieve his melancholy were received in dimly lighted rooms. Old letters, letters of the courtship days, were read aloud, and memoranda of the once happy household whose petty economies and regulated routine had never wearied. There were moments, moved

thereto by some extra brand of sympathy, when he trod once more the asphodel fields of sentiment and took his listener with him.

Men who came to him trembling on the verge of matrimony trembled anew when they left, but from a different cause. Why venture when the end might be so near the beginning? Others went forth animated to the deed, fearful that their happiness might be snatched from them before their grasp encircled it. Women, born lovers of pathos, came and wept at the recital of the brief dream. Plain, unpretending, commonplace as he was, James Stiles represented to them the husband of their choice in everything except physical and financial attributes. Each had believed in the existence of a lover who would weep over their letters and their powder-puffs, wear chains made from their hair, talk of them to other women and be indifferent to the attractions of these feminine listeners, no matter how flagrantly displayed.

Every woman in her heart commends the action of the man who refuses to replace the picture in a shrine by another—even though the other may be her own.

Mrs. Stiles, deceased, had had moments of prettiness, such as come to all; they were fugitive, as was her wit; but, viewed from a distance, she appeared an ideal of loveliness and cleverness, with whom no mere mortal could hope to compete. Strangers who were taken to visit the sorrowing husband would remark that the late Mrs. Stiles must have been a wonderfully beautiful creature, and the answer, coming from one whose memory of her vaguely blended with a composite photograph of others, was always in the affirmative. Those of the fair sex who know how little real beauty there is beneath the great majority of masculine laudation, gave also a pitying assent, which seemed to hope for a like idealization when their brief term of existence was over.

When James at length responded to reiterated assertions from relatives, friends and even the family physician

that he must go into the world and forget his grief, he became the idol of the circles where he had first been received on sufferance, and later valued as the representative of the anchors and brakes of life.

The husband who does not proclaim his disappointment at marriage is a rarity, but the widower who sees the second summer wax and wane and still talks unremittingly of the departed is practically *sui generis*. James enjoyed the isolation of superiority, but it was an isolation rather of the letter than of the spirit, for he was loudly welcomed to his old haunts and a few new ones, always preceded by the same unusual introduction—that of one who was faithful to the memory of his wife. Young girls were warned that he would never remarry; the more experienced, who disbelieved, had their trouble for their pains, as the saying goes. No one could assert that he was indifferent or that he overstepped the bounds of propriety, but it was easy to see, in his gracious, almost courtly manner—for manner as well as face had improved under the discipline and emoluments of grief—that he loved the whole sex on account of One.

As the months passed, widowed and spinster aunts dropped out of the ranks, each remembering "dear James, who has set an example to all." Those of the living who might have resented this favor did not, feeling that he had rightfully earned his reward. With the opportunities afforded by his increased income, he took advantage of certain speculative tips and profited thereby. By easy steps he became the arbiter of manners, morals and finances in the family parties, and to the younger and flightier members who confessed their complex heart troubles, he had but one oracular prescription, which was embraced in the word "faithfulness," and however Mormonesque the questioner may have been when he came, at departure he had exchanged the heart's Utah for an Eden whose Eve, like her prototype, was unrivaled.

It cannot be denied, even though a

biographer should fall into the usual weakness of hero-worship, that James loved the role in life which had been forced upon him by an untoward fate. He had been proud as a husband and had enjoyed the brief term when, as benedick, he had stepped from comparative obscurity into a searchlight more or less distinct; but as widower he held the actual centre of the stage, and he who has once experienced that sensation, say those who know, is never again satisfied with the obscure corners of life's wings. It is true that James mourned sincerely and lengthily, but there was an ecstatic reaction to that mourning which few who have lost their better halves enjoy.

To hear his name, when he was announced at a social function, greeted by that peculiar hum which heralds the great in low-voiced explanations; to have the softest chairs and liver-wings at family dinners; to meet the pathetic droop of languorous eyes from feminine sympathizers, instead of the mere allurements of coquetry accorded other men, was to self-love the fattening diet of forbidden fruit.

The beginnings of friendships are weak things, hardly worth while tracing to their source, for friendship is only so named through growth, habit and the daily joining of the multiplicity of myriad interests. The friendship of Jenkins and James was a case in point—what matter where it commenced? It was genuine enough to have begun in childhood and had elements of steadfastness which suggested a directors' dinner.

It was Jenkins who introduced James into bohemia, and it was he who was a go-between with the elect of the hours of recreation and the elect of the genealogical tree. Jenkins called himself sympathetic, with a many-sided interest toward human nature. He contended that he was equally at home when, as guest, he enjoyed the sight of a huge roast in front of him, a butler at his elbow and a vintage of port on the sideboard, which made him seem distressingly verdant while he upheld a

conversation which still took cognizance of the Thirty-nine Articles, as when he was entertained at a forty-cent table d'hôte, where rivers of red ink and small talk flowed unceasingly from caviar to cordial. Others said that he had no backbone. Whatever the cause, the result was most satisfactory, for he ate a dinner at his own expense as rarely as he disagreed with the opinion of a possible host.

Jenkins was a very small fly on the outer rim of that vast cobweb at whose centre sits the great spider called Art. He painted inconsequent landscapes at inconsequent sums on which he lived, supplemented by his dinners out, with a degree of *savoir faire* which would have surprised a student interested in sociological problems.

With a marked ability for making both ends meet and tie in a bowknot, James had never been chary of his hospitality. In their bachelor days they had enjoyed many a convivial tête-à-tête at his expense as well as many when as co-hosts they entertained Jenkins's friends, James furnishing the dinner and Jenkins the enjoyers thereof. In return, Jenkins was ever ready to see James through the function of a family repast, uphold his dignity under the pressure of relatives' eyes and diplomatically evade their interrogations regarding the Forbidden Land, which, it was hinted, were made so that the questioners might disapprove with more foundation of fact. He enveloped bohemia in an atmosphere half conventional, half hazy, which allayed fear and aroused expectation at one and the same time. The relatives were apt to aver that it could not be so bad a place if Jenkins was its exponent, and then with that uninvited second thought remember that men are but wolves in sheep's clothing.

The courtship of James had been a sore affliction for Jenkins. There had been few loose hours hanging heavily on the fiancé's hands, and when these occurred they were more apt to take the form of selfish rhapsodizing over pipes in the room of one or the other

than the cozy dinners which were given up while the usual period of economizing which precedes matrimony took place. Jenkins bore with his disappointment philosophically, wise enough to see a conventional ending to this as to other courtships. He was not far wrong in his reckoning, for when the household settled down after the honeymoon Jenkins was the valued guest who never lacked a welcome and never allowed one to become cold through disuse. No matter how devoted a couple may be, there are moments when they enjoy the intrusion of the outer world for the joy of the after tête-à-tête. Jenkins's visits were the sauce piquant on the sparsely flavored dish of matrimony.

It was Jenkins who spoke loudly and frequently in James's absence of the young couple's unprecedented devotion, and when they made their occasional reappearances he preceded them with words which made these appearances events. It was Jenkins who kept alive bohemia's interest in a marriage which seemed to answer for all time the question as to whether it really was, generally speaking, a failure, and it was the same faithful friend who triumphantly pointed out to still carping relatives the futility of further criticism of a man who had but one name inscribed on the pages of his heart—one name and one duty.

It was Jenkins who first appeared at the scene of sorrow and during the early days of affliction ate many mourning dinners with unimpaired appetite, while he listened sympathetically to twice-told tales of courtship and marriage, supplemented by the epilogue of black-bordered adjectives.

It was Jenkins who paraded his companion's grief for him and was proud as James himself of the furor it created. Many an impresario has taken less pride in the prima donna made from raw material.

It was Jenkins who one day received a note written in a strange hand, signed with an unfamiliar name and delivered by a deaf-and-dumb messenger,

imploping him to come at once, for James Stiles was desperately ill and needed his immediate attendance. The address was that of a suburb, a little out of the beaten track of travel, but easily reached from the city, like all suburbs, within the hour. The mystery of the strange handwriting, the affliction of the messenger, aroused the usual suspicion of the city dweller whose insignificance and fear of bodily harm seem in indirect proportion.

He pondered the matter for awhile, then wrote a note explaining his absence in large characters which he left in plain sight for the mute to read while he went into his inner room to throw a suit of pajamas, one sock and a soiled collar in his bag in his trepidation and presentiment of coming ill.

The way led by James's bachelor apartment, and he stopped there to learn that the occupant had not been home for over a week. There seemed, therefore, some foundation for the call, but the trip on the local in the deep-growing twilight of an early winter's eve, by the side of a speechless companion, was not inspiring.

At the station named in the message a rickety carryall with a driver muffled into a lack of identity by means of a turned-up coat collar and a heavy scarf did not tend to lighten his apprehensions.

He wanted to go back, but was ashamed, for his reason told him that without an enemy in the world, without any money or valuables, having left a note explaining his departure and destination there could be no real danger; but there are situations when foreboding overcomes judgment.

After a drive of a couple of miles, they approached an isolated villa where the driver turned and announced the end of the journey in hoarse accents.

Jenkins took heart. Under the depressing conditions of season and time, the villa had a cheery aspect which did not convey the idea of tragedy. Through the light fall of snow he could detect the edges of well-trimmed box and the outlines of oval flower-beds. The square porch was glassed in for a

sun parlor. Between dainty muslin curtains an open fire, a couple of children playing on the rug and feminine touches of grace and homeliness were evident. It was the country residence of a well-to-do business man.

The door was opened while his fingers were on the knocker. A petite woman, of the brunette type, with lustrous eyes and a sallow skin, witness of foreign blood, opened it and at her accented words of greeting Jenkins felt a thrill of gratitude for the money he had once expended, after the sale of a large canvas, on some lessons in French, a waste he had often deplored, as his sole return seemed to be the power of ordering dishes in French of waiters who understood his own language perfectly.

He stepped inside, lifting his hat with what he hoped was a foreign grace. That had gone with the lessons and had been practiced valiantly.

"Gee swee—" He sought for the other word.

"*Oui, oui.* He speak of you often. He say *quelquefois* you come. You respond to the doctor's word at the once. I thank you."

"You are?" He looked about helplessly. She must be a distant cousin, but why this secrecy? He had often resented a certain reserve in James, particularly since his widowerhood, contending that friendship, like love, demands a clean slate. He had felt piqued at James's unaccountable absences now and then. The present situation showed that he had cause for complaint.

"You are?" he repeated.

Her eyes opened a little wider.

"Are, monsieur?" and then with the subtle reasoning of her nationality that different tongues produce strange confusion of thought:

"His—yes, his *femme*, of course."

"*Femme*—a woman, a wife, a feminine being." He wished that the Gallic tongue was not so prolific of synonyms. *Femme*. No, it could not be. James was not that kind. Every way he turned there seemed a mental impasse.

She took his hat and coat while the children, leaving their toys, came toward him.

"You think them like heem? *Qui?* They are his miniatures?"

She was pleased at his assent; she would have resented, with the pride of a true wife in her husband's plainness, a statement that they looked like herself.

He followed her upstairs, a mental arithmetic sum in his thought.

The older had said five years and it was six since the death of the first wife. Um!

James had sent for him at the moment when it was thought that the attack of pneumonia might prove fatal. The crisis had been met and passed favorably, but it was feared a relapse might ensue. He explained this weakly, evading the look in Jenkins's eye and the approaching explanation that the eye demanded. He begged Jenkins to stay until all danger was over, and then became seemingly unconscious.

Jenkins made himself comfortable without delay or protest. There was no work on hand to urge his return, and the comfort of the home appealed to him. He decided that there was no cooking in the world like the French cooking, so different in the home from that of the restaurant. He was flattered to learn that one of the children had been named for him without his knowledge and consent, and that he had been a godfather by proxy.

The doctor and nurse excluding them both from the sick-room, he resumed his French lessons under madame's tuition, and, his old facility returning, graduated easily from the knowledge that Mary's cow has wandered into Anne's garden to that of the facts concerning James's second marriage, which had taken place as he returned from his wife's burial in the Western town where he had been taken ill and was nursed back to health by one as forlorn as himself, a newly arrived, lonely little person who had expatriated herself from her beloved France to make a living in the new world, and had met

with only discouragement and loss. James, sympathetic to feminine distress, a born lover of home and wife, had joined his loneliness to hers and dispensed with the usual conventionalities of mourning.

She explained incidentally that it was probably due to the difference in faith and up-bringing which had alienated his relatives and that her only sorrow was his enforced absence on business, the encroachments of a busy man's "affaires."

But that James had proved as good and true a husband the second time as he had the first, there was no shadow of doubt.

Later, a shamefaced man, James, propped up with many pillows, with a face emaciated by his illness, and burning with the flush of an inward fever of humiliation which consumed him, attempted to explain. Jenkins waved the explanation airily aside.

Jenkins had done a good deal of thinking in these convalescing days. He realized and forgave the moral zig-zags of his erring friend. He saw how James, with an innate love for the centre of the stage, had never had a chance to stand in the spot light of public approval until it was too late. The moderate praise he had achieved as a married man had implanted the germ of unrest in his system. He had weakly yielded to temptation made so easy for him by others' approval. Jenkins himself had often pulled the string for James to dance. Circumstances lending themselves easily to deception, it would have taken a

stronger man to announce boldly a second marriage made in such hot haste, born and nurtured though it was in loneliness and grief.

He recalled his own encomiums on James's faithfulness and smiled grimly at his discomfiture. He could lash him with the words of his ridicule and scorn. He could strike a compensating balance for his own humiliation in the humiliation of the other.

But, on the other hand, he saw before him a vista of probable week-ends in the charming household to which he was already endeared; he went further and saw an old age at the corner of the fireside, for he was too poor to marry and had no inner magnet for heiresses.

James would have condemnation enough and to spare from others. It would be punishment sufficient to step down and out from the stage centre; to play no longer the role of the Afflicted.

It was surely not for friendship to add its weight of disapproval.

He met the questioning expression cheerfully, turning his own eyes obliquely cityward with what a close observer might have termed a wink. "You can count on me, old chap." It was the term he had employed in former days when James had sought his services to avert the criticism of the family.

It was a long time since James had needed its underlying strength. His lips, ornamented with a three days' growth of beard, trembled syllables of thankfulness and, turning on his side, he drowsed peacefully, as a child sleeps whose punishment has been remitted.



TWO ROSES

THE dawn is sweet with fragrance of a rose new-blown today,
 But ah! my dreams of yesteryears and long last nights of bliss!
 Oh, I'm fain to have my faded rose, whose perfume died away
 With the radiance of a moonbeam and the ceasing of a kiss!

MAISIE SHAINWALD.

THE MOUNTAIN CABIN

By Edwin L. Sabin

UP Bear Creek, six miles from Eley's ranch, on a little resting-place of the mountain-side, amidst the pine and fir and spruce, stood the cabin. The folk at Eley's, and in communication with the folk at Eley's, knew it as the cabin of "that Chicago couple livin' out for their health." One may run across many such cabins in Colorado.

Above and below the cabin stretched the mountain. From the cabin front porch extended a view embracing twenty miles of valley, seventy miles of peak and range—snowy, wooded, bare. It was a view always grand, always beautiful, never the same, ever inspiring to noble thoughts. Day and night, like a harp twanged by unseen fingers, rose and fell in praise the majestic symphony of the million trees.

In style the cabin was rustic; but it was by no means frail, for it was built of logs, and well sided with slabs with the bark on. Supporting it was a stout foundation of cemented rocks rounded by a long-departed glacier. Being laid upon a light slope the foundation was higher in front than behind, and the front porch was reached by a flight of steps. From the flight of steps a faint path wound down, finally skirting Bear Creek, to join the valley road; up the path came the cabin's supplies from the ranch—butter, eggs, milk, and the like.

At the rear of the cabin was a shed, for wood and miscellany; a dug-out, for perishable provisions, and a tank, which held water from the creek, piped therein by an ingenious system. The cabin appeared to have four rooms.

Such was the spot, and such was the cabin. Around, the pungent, friendly pines; overhead, the blue Colorado sky; below, the valley; in the distance, the range: a home in the world, yet not of it; a home where peace might bide and love might bloom and two might live by themselves, all-sufficient to each other.

Day came early, for the cabin fronted full upon the east. Night, too, came early, for the mountain behind swallowed the sun while yet he had an hour of grace. Now it was eight o'clock, and already the first coyote had signaled "All's well," the May evening had deepened into gloom, pine had blended with pine, and stars had spanned the blue from crest to crest. Upon the moist air floated the wild, fresh, strangely soul-stirring odor of balsam and mountain sage.

Amidst the darkness were set two of the cabin's windows, softly aglow as if their curtains might be phosphorescent. But the glow had source in an argand-lamp, whose rays, mellowed by its round globe, spread a cheerful light through the cabin's sitting-room and generously overflowed into the blackness pressing against the panes.

The sitting-room looked very pleasant and cozy, for bizarre Navaho rugs covered the floor, bright-colored paper and cheerful pictures covered the walls, comfortable furniture was scattered here and there, in a fireplace a pine chunk flamed and sputtered.

Who would have imagined that beleaguering so close were mountain, vale and forest!

At one end of the room, from a table strewn with magazines and books, smiled the lamp; at the other end chattered the fire; lying upon a Navaho-blanketed couch, against the wall, at one side of the fire, sneered a man; in a chair at the other side of the fire wept a woman.

The woman was beautiful; not with that beauty which would command a lover to write verses to her eyebrow, to her waist, to her ankle, but with that beauty of a gracious whole, that beauty which dazzles not but ever radiates and sweetly warms: the beauty of a woman. Apart from such one might forget the shade of hair, the color of eyes, the shape of lips; but he could not forget *herself*.

The man was tall, heavy of frame, but slight of weight, fine of hair, fine of brown mustache. As he moved he coughed convulsively. The cough told much, but the thin hands, the thin face, the marvelously clear complexion, whose only color was collected in the hollow of the cheeks, the shadowed eyes, the pallid lips now distorted by the cough, told more.

"Oh, yes; you'd be one of the 'inconsolable' kind—I don't think!" he panted. "Rats! You'd be just like any other woman; bury a man in the morning and get another at noon. That's the way with them."

"Don't talk so, Ralph," sobbed the woman. "I don't see what I've done or said to make you."

"Boo, hoo, hoo! Well, don't bawl about it," returned the man cuttingly. "Better save on tears. You might be shy of them, and need them after I've shuffled off."

The woman quickly arose, and trailing her crimson house gown crossed and knelt beside his couch.

"Don't be cruel to me, Ralph darling," she pleaded, smoothing back his hair. "I can't bear it, when we two are here by ourselves and might be so happy. You're all I've got, dearest."

The man irritably jerked aside his head, as if resenting her fingers. But the fingers patiently followed, and

under their touch he grew more passive. The woman's face, bending over, although mistreated by weeping, was filled all with compassion and yearning; through their tears the eyes looked tenderness.

"You needn't think you're going to get any life insurance out of me with your wheedling," he snarled. "Do you think I'm fool enough to leave money for another man to spend? Not much! Let him go hang, for all of me!"

Oh, so often in the mood he was tonight had he boasted thus, of that wretched life insurance. The woman sighed.

"Have I ever said anything to you about life insurance, dear?" she inquired mildly. "I don't ask you to take it out, on my account. You are all I want—just you. And you mustn't talk of 'shuffling off,' dear. It hurts me to have you. For you aren't going to, you know."

"You bet I'm not," declared the man, with a vindictive laugh. "I'm going to live on, if only just to fool you."

"It wouldn't be fooling me, dear," objected the woman, still gently smoothing his hair. "It would be what I wish most of anything in the world; that, and having you good to me, at the same time."

"Bosh!" he grunted. "You needn't say you prefer being tied down to an invalid, when there are so many better men running loose."

"You won't always be an invalid, dear," insisted the woman eagerly. She leaned and kissed his forehead, where the ugly lines still remained. "You're getting better right along—aren't you?"

The man's face cleared; no disease is so hopeful as consumption.

"I believe I am," he declared confidently. "I cough less, don't you think so? You've noticed it yourself, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes; and you certainly sleep better, too," encouraged the woman, smiling brightly.

"And I eat well, too," he asserted.

"Of course, I'm still confounded weak."

He scowled.

"That's only natural," comforted the woman. "You can't expect to do everything at once, you know, dear."

"It's the altitude," he said peevishly. "I'll never get strong as long as I stay so high up. There was an article about it in the last medical journal I read. I'm getting better in every other way, but I don't get strong. Seems to me what I need is to go lower down, and to some place like California. Yes, sir; California—Southern California—is the place now for me. What do you think?"

"All right; let's go to California, then," agreed the woman, with just a trace of weariness beneath her cheery tones.

"I believe that three months in California would set me up so I could begin work at something," continued the man, now with feverish animation. "I could start that poultry ranch I've been planning for next year. It would keep me out of doors, and would be a first-class business. Of course," he added, with a return to his former sneer, "it would be hard on you, keeping you so boxed up on a ranch, but no matter how well I was it wouldn't do for me to go back to office work in town—not right away, at least."

"I shouldn't mind, dear," assured the woman soothingly. "So long as I'm with you I don't care where we live or what we do. You're all my world. Shall we go to California, then?"

"How can we? You know very well we can't, unless we walk!" he replied, again peevish. "We've put nearly all our money into this cabin."

"But if you ought to go to California, we must arrange somehow, Ralph," she said earnestly.

"Send me on, and give you a chance to stay behind and cut loose, I suppose," he accused, his jealousy aflame.

"You know I didn't mean that," she reproved. "Only, where there's a will there's a way, and if you think

that California is the place for you, then we must go to California."

"Well, if you'll kindly tell me where we're to get the money to go with and live there with, we'll start," he sneered. "What we have now would scarcely be enough for the Pullman porter."

"How much ought we to have, dearie?" she asked, patiently smoothing his hair.

"We ought to have two thousand dollars clear; that would get me strong and give me a boost on the poultry ranch," he said. "But instead, I suppose I'll have to stick up here, where the altitude holds me back."

"Perhaps up here will prove all right, though," proffered the woman hopefully. "Don't you know, we were recommended to come? We tried North Carolina, and that seemed too damp; and we tried San Antonio, and that didn't help you much; and we tried Arizona, and that wasn't quite suited to your case; and then we came to Colorado, and it has agreed with you the best of all—hasn't it, dear?"

"I don't know whether it has or not," said the man irritably. "Of course, I'm getting better; I can see a difference every week, and so can you. I don't cough so much, and I eat well; you say that yourself. And I believe I'm gaining in weight, my face is filling out—don't you think so?"

"Oh, yes, dear. I've been noticing that."

"But I don't gain strength. It's the altitude; I know it's the altitude. All I need now is to get to a lower level, where it's warm—not hot and dry as in Arizona, but to a climate like California. Put me in California for three months—just for three months—and I'd be practically well. Can't you see? I made a mistake in coming so high up."

"Perhaps not, dear," soothed the woman. "You mustn't expect *too* much in a short time. We've got our own little cabin on the mountainside, and you're growing better right along, and we're together where nobody bothers us, and we ought to be so happy; and if we can't go to California

we must be content here—especially when you're doing so *well*! After you're acclimated, maybe you'll improve faster."

"There is one satisfaction: you're where other men can't nab you, anyhow," he asserted. "Not until I'm out of the way, anyhow."

"Have I ever said that I wanted other men, dear?" she asked sorrowfully.

His only response was a sneering "Humph!" and a shrug, equally contemptuous, of the thin shoulders.

"Have I ever been anything to you but loving and tender and kind?" she persisted.

"Oh, I suppose not," he confessed grudgingly. "Women always like to nurse. But you can't make me believe that a woman prefers a patient for a husband. *Then* she wants a *man*."

"Don't, Ralph," she entreated, her eyes filling.

"And I *will* be a man, too," he declared combatively. "Two thousand dollars and three months are all I ask. That is all—and I'd be a man just as good as any of them. Not but what I'm getting better as it is," he added, looking up at her with covert challenge.

"Of course you are, dear," she agreed compassionately.

"Here I am, doing just as I've been told to do, and trying, trying, trying, all the time. Everything around is strong; the mountains are strong, the pines are strong, the animals are strong; and I breathe the air and look at the blue sky and sit out in the sun, and the world lies there at my feet, and still *I* don't get strong. I can't walk as far as when I first came here. Other people do what I'm doing, and grow strong! Didn't Mr. Whiting, Helen? He got strong, and went back East, didn't he?"

A racking fit of coughing seized him, and swayed him back and forth.

"Yes, dear, he certainly did. He lived as we are living, for six months, and went back to Chicago as well as anybody."

"And how bad off was he?" gasped the man. "Worse than I?"

"He was pretty sick," evaded the woman.

"Possibly the altitude didn't affect him as it affects me," argued the man. "What's one person's meat is another's poison. Carolina and Texas and Arizona and Colorado have done what they can for me, and I believe I've simply been losing time. If I'd gone to California in the first place, I'd have been cured long ago. And now I'm stuck here on the mountainside, broke—or mighty near broke. And all I want is a chance; three months somewhere else would make me well."

"But you're getting better, Ralph."

"Yes, I'm getting better."

"And you're comfortably fixed, and you don't require much money, here, to live on, and you've got me."

"You bet I've got you!"

A sudden knock was heard upon the front door. The woman threw back her head and listened; the man waited, curiously. Silence reigned. The knock was repeated, gently, insistently. With a questioning glance at her husband the woman quickly arose, and stepping to the door opened it.

A man's form was outlined against the darkness without.

"Good evening," said a man's voice.

"Good evening," faltered the woman, slightly retreating.

The man entered, and with him entered the breath of the night—humid, chill, odorous with the mountain; a breath of mystery and of solitude.

"Good evening," he said again, with a half-laugh, to the man on the couch, and with his eyes taking in the whole room at the same time.

He was tall, broad-shouldered, black-haired, dark-eyed, straight-nosed, crisp-mustached, white-teethed, unshaven but not unkempt—a man of virility which instantly permeated the atmosphere to every corner. About his neck was a red kerchief, upon his body was a stained brown canvas mountain coat, his trousers were tucked into the usual mountain boot, lacing halfway to the knee.

He might have been a prospector; he might have been an engineer; he might have been—almost anything, for the mountains harbor much.

"Good evening," growled the man on the couch.

"I was prospecting around the hill here, and saw your light and thought I'd stop in," explained the visitor bluffly. "A light looks good to a man out in the pines. These nights aren't what you'd exactly call hot," and he shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"Sit down," invited the woman, now closing the door. "Draw a chair up to the fire."

The man on the couch said nothing.

"I believe I will, thank you," accepted the visitor.

He grasped a chair, and with an easy liteness planted it before the blaze.

"I reckon if I'm going to sit comfortable I'd better remove some of my furniture first—if you'll excuse me," he remarked.

Forthwith he brusquely slipped off his stiff canvas-covered, blanket-lined coat, and unbuckling his cartridge-belt which, with the pistol in its holster was revealed beneath, tossed all together to one side.

"Nice things in case you're out in the cold world," he said, with a smile at the woman, "but kind of unhandy for a social call."

In the freedom of waistcoat and blue flannel shirt sleeves, dropping his drab felt hat upon the floor beside him, he sat down and thrust his hobnailed soles to the blaze.

"I sure never expected to find a shack away up here by its lonesome," he observed genially to the woman, who had seated herself on his right. "Out roughing it, I reckon?"

"We're living in the mountains awhile for my husband's health," explained the woman.

The visitor glanced sympathetically at the unresponsive figure on the couch.

"I savvy," he said. "'Lunger'?"

The man on the couch scowled.

"No, no," corrected the woman hastily. "He hasn't consumption.

It's merely a bronchial trouble, and we thought we could get rid of it quicker by coming up among the pines, where the air is pure."

"Nothing serious," mumbled the man on the couch.

"And he's improving right along," asserted the woman.

"O—oh!" drawled the visitor, glancing at her and nodding understandingly. "Sure. *Doesn't* look as though he had much the matter with him, does he?"

"Your cabin?" he asked, diplomatically changing the subject.

"Yes; we built it last fall," said the woman.

"Say, but you've got it fixed up mighty cozy, though!" commented the visitor, half turning and surveying the details. "Wouldn't mind camping out this way myself. It beats a tent, I reckon."

"We like it," said the woman briefly.

"From the East?" queried the visitor.

"Well, we came here from Arizona, but we used to live in the East. Chicago's our home."

"Chicago's a great place," volunteered the visitor.

"Ever been there?" demanded the man on the couch shortly.

"Once or twice, maybe," responded the other, eying him. He addressed the woman again.

"It'll be mighty fine up here in the summer."

"Yes, if we stay," she said, with a fond little smile at the couch. "But just before you came in my husband was talking of changing to California. He thinks the altitude here doesn't agree with him."

"Well, now, you hadn't ought to leave a layout like this," asserted the visitor, turning to the couch, interpreting a subtle imploration in the woman's tones, "'specially when you're getting on so fine. Why, you stay on here through the summer and by fall you'll be as frisky as a regular old grizzly in a berry patch!"

"Yes; she wants me to stay here

and die," sneered the man on the couch. "I know the game."

"Ralph, don't!" entreated the woman, tears coming to her eyes.

"See her weep already?" sneered the man. "Won't that come in handy when she has to play the inconsolable widow!"

"Why, say, now," expostulated the visitor, glancing from one to the other in a puzzled manner, "you don't look like a man who's about to cash in—does he! And she don't look as though she wanted you to, either. If I had an outfit like this I'd just naturally drop my lines and stay by it like a cow-pony tied to an alfalfa stack."

"If you like it so well come around the day after the funeral and hang up your hat. She'll doubtless be glad to see you," sneered the man.

"Ralph!" besought the woman helplessly. "Don't mind him; he jokes so!" she said aside.

"Humorist, is he?" drawled the visitor; but his mien was somewhat contemptuous as he deliberately surveyed the personage on the couch. "I reckon you're supposed to be the man of the family," he continued, addressing him again; "so if you're so stuck on California, why don't you go? All you've got to do is point west and slide."

"I'm willing to go any time," asserted the woman.

"Oh, yes, you're a great talker when you've got anybody to listen," sneered the man on the couch. "Why don't I go to California? Because I can't. I haven't the money."

"That's a pretty good reason, pardner," drawled the visitor.

"And so I'll stay here until it's up to my widow. The only thing I can do is fool her on the life insurance. I had just broken the news to her, when you entered, that there wasn't any. She was feeling rather despondent, in consequence, until the appearance of yourself, being a stalwart specimen of the welcome sex, made life worth living to her again."

"But seems like I heard you say

a minute ago you were getting better," drawled the visitor, still eying him steadily.

"He is—he is, aren't you, Ralph? He only talks this way to tease me," quavered the woman.

"Well, I should reckon it teases you," remarked the visitor coolly. "But I suppose he'd get better faster in California—that's it."

"It's the altitude here is holding me back; I have to fight the altitude," affirmed the man eagerly. "Some people affected as I am with this—this chronic bronchial trouble, can't stand altitude. It weakens them. That's what it does to me. I seem to be improving—I *am* improving, in certain ways, but I stay weak. The altitude saps my strength. But three months in California would set me up; I know it. That's all I need—three months. And nevertheless I can't go," he concluded bitterly. "Three months between me and health, and here I've got to forego them and struggle along with the odds against me."

"We've been to so many places," faltered the woman. "And we thought this cabin would prove just the thing."

"Maybe it will," encouraged the visitor. "Living out this way cures lots of people."

"But I tell him if he thinks California will do him any good, we must go there—even if I have to walk while he rides," she continued. It seemed a relief to have someone, if only a stranger, upon whom for a moment to lean. "I'd walk gladly, for the sake of seeing him there."

"I believe you sure would," affirmed the visitor, gazing upon her with open, honest admiration in his voice and face.

The man on the couch, watching the two narrowly, flushed with anger.

"Who the devil are you," he snarled fiercely, "coming in this way and telling my wife what you think she would or would not do! Lord in heaven! Can't I even get a cottage thirty miles up in the mountains, but that some man sneaks in and tries to

make a cuckold of me? You'll burn your wings, friend, for your pains. That's all. I'm not dead, and, by George, I'm not going to die, if only to spite you all. But it's disgraceful. I won't stand it, Helen. You can't work it, just yet. So you might as well bid your good-looking knight-errant tra-la-la, and tell him to keep on his own preserves, or there'll be trouble."

The woman, with face scarlet, stared straight ahead into the blaze. Her hands flew to her cheeks, as if to hide her shame; then suddenly fell, clenched, to her sides.

The visitor looked full upon the speaker, and calmly, almost insolently, laughed.

"It's all right, pard," he said. "You're not going to lose her. She's a woman, and women are the sort that don't stampede. If she was a man I bet she wouldn't stay with you five minutes. You're locoed, plumb locoed; that's what's the matter with you. And as for wings—well, much obliged, but as I size up just at present I don't feel any sprouting." He paused, and laughed again—a short, bitter little laugh. "I reckon if I told you who I was, you'd take back that about the wings. What do you think, old man?"

"I asked who the devil you are, and I want to know," insisted the other sullenly.

"Sure. Of course you do," agreed the visitor pleasantly. "So I'll tell you. I might be named Jones or Smith—I knew a man named Smith, once—or—or Higginderfer—I knew a man named Higginderfer, too—but the fact is, I'm just naturally called Colorado Kid. That's what. Nice name, ain't it?"

"Oh!" exclaimed the woman, with a shuddering little intaking of breath, staring at him.

"Colorado Kid, eh?" sneered the man on the couch. "So? We've been reading about you, I fancy. Quite interesting and elevating. You're the fellow that——"

"I'm the fellow said to have done

'that,'" interrupted the visitor sharply. "But I never made a woman cry—'less 'twas my mother," he added softly. "She's cried over me, back home, I reckon."

"But I thought they—the officers—were after you!" exclaimed the woman. "We saw something about it in this morning's paper. What are you doing here? Won't you be caught?"

"Yes, they're after me, all right," said the visitor easily. "And they'll catch me—but not till I'm ready to be caught, I'm hoping. When I'm ready I'll give myself up. I didn't do it. I know what the papers say I did, but I didn't. Lookie here," he appealed, squarely facing the woman, "look me in the eyes, and see if I'm lying. I say I didn't do it. I——"

From the couch came a scornful sniff. The visitor faced quickly in that direction.

"And I tell you I didn't do it, too. But I don't reckon your opinion would count very much against me, anyhow." And he turned back. "Yours would, though. I didn't do it, and I can prove I didn't, if I'm given a chance. But what chance has a man got, unless he takes it, when he has a price on his head, dead or alive? Dead is the easiest. Dead, I'm sure guilty and executed, without the bother of a trial. It costs only a cartridge. But I didn't do it. I wasn't in twenty miles of the place, and I can prove it, when things come round right for me. A day in Denver, to do as I please, that's all I ask. There's a woman there—or she was there; she knows, and if I can get to talk with her before I'm corraled, it's all right. But if it's known I want to see her, and can prove up by her—then I lose out. Savvy? The sheriff's bound to land me, this time, and plant me for good."

"A woman? What kind of a woman?"

"A real woman. Your kind of a woman," he replied boldly. "I know what you thought, maybe; but don't. That's the wrong trail. I just helped her, once, and now she can help me, if she'll come forward and answer

yes and no, a couple of times. She will, too, if she learns about me, and they let her. All I want is to get to her first and explain. You see—she didn't know me for Colorado Kid; I was just a man when she needed one."

"Humph!" commented the man on the couch.

The speaker flushed, but smiled.

"That's the truth, pard," he said over his shoulder.

"I hope you'll reach Denver, then," said the woman.

"I hope so, too," he replied cheerfully. "But when there's a bounty of fifteen hundred dollars on a man's scalp he's liable to reach one of two places mighty sudden, and neither of them's Denver."

The eyes of the man on the couch, lowering so steadily upon him, widened, then narrowed.

"That's a good sum. I suppose you feel important," he sneered.

"Not exactly, being as it's fifteen hundred more than I deserve," returned the other over his shoulder. "I never did stand for taking another party's share of things. Now, about this woman," he resumed, with a trace of awkwardness. "She's your kind—and she's my kind. I'd like to have you believe this, in case I never do reach Denver, and prove up. Give a dog a bad name, I know—and of course I'm Colorado Kid. I've been on the range, and I've busted bronchos, and I've shot up towns, and I've done a heap of talking and a heap of foolish acting. Cowboys will, you know. It's once a year for them, and the rest of the time it's sweat or freeze, go hungry and sleep when you can. But all the time there's been only one kind of woman for me—*your* kind; the kind I left out in Illinois, when I cut loose. That's my home place—Illinois."

"I was born in Illinois," said the woman.

"Then you'd better ask your friend to stay all night," snarled the man on the couch, his jealousy bursting into words.

"If you want to sleep, dear, we'll excuse you," said the woman plead-

ingly, but with gentle dignity in her voice.

"I expect you would," he retorted sarcastically.

"I'll be going in a minute," volunteered the visitor. "Night's my time for traveling, just now." He hesitated. "It's God's country, Illinois is. It's not like this country out here—tilted up on end and growing mostly pine and prickly pear."

He hesitated again. The man on the couch, who had been fidgeting restlessly, changed position and sat up. His face was white and a sinister purpose smoldered in his eyes. His wife glanced at him anxiously.

"Going to try sitting awhile, dear?" she asked.

"There was a girl, back in Illinois," resumed the visitor, reddening beneath his tan. "She's a woman, now. I reckon that maybe if I'd have stayed we might have hit it off, and perhaps I'd be in a cabin of my own tonight, instead of being in somebody else's. Her and me, in a cabin up in the hills—that's what I always get to thinking of when I listen to the pines; and the claims I've staked out would cover, I s'pose, from here plumb to Ouray. I'd—I'd even be willing to be a 'lunger' if I could have the girl I love to myself, up among the hills—like you and him are living. But I've missed out. Some blamed coyote lied about me and I thought she believed it, and I got mad and skipped. That's all—except that I'm not *plumb* bad. I've sort of suspicioned that some day she'd hear about me, or maybe even come across me—the world's mighty narrow, somehow—and she'd be glad to know I'd kept clean—clean as a man can keep, and be where I've been. Her name was Nellie Thomas, and she lived at Apple Valley, Illinois. Maybe you'll meet her yourself; and if you do, I want you to tell her what—what I've been saying. Tell her I'd rather have Apple Valley, with her in it, than the whole State of Colorado. And I've kept pretty clean—for *her*."

The man on the couch straightened forward, and his thin lips slightly

opened on his clenched teeth as, his eyes fixed upon his visitor's broad back, he worked cautiously with his feet at something on the floor.

The woman impulsively leaned toward the speaker.

"Bert," she said, with the all-tender, reassuring smile of an angel. "Bert, don't you——"

A sudden horror leaped into her eyes, and widened in an instant over her whole face.

"Ralph!" she cried, springing up, "Ralph!"

Her chair clattered to the floor.

In a flash the cowboy was on his feet. His chair went spinning across the room.

"Look out, you blamed fool!" he rasped, whirling toward the couch, as he kept in front of her. "That gun's loaded!"

Crash!

The sitting-room was filled with smoke. The cowboy staggered a step, and slowly sank in a heap. The man on the couch peered, and lowered the weapon.

With a stifled shriek the woman knelt over the huddled form. The face stared wonderingly up at her.

"Why, Nellie, it sure *is* you. I didn't know, before. You see, every right kind of woman I've met has looked like I thought you might look. I'm mighty glad I've had a chance to tell you. I——"

The voice stopped short; the speaker shuddered, choked. The woman felt something wet beneath her; a blotch of blood was spreading across the Navaho rug under her knees.

"He got me, didn't he! I had a

notion somebody was going to get me, before I made good at Denver; that's why I stopped in, just for luck. You looked so like white folks in here."

"Oh, he didn't mean to shoot you; he didn't mean to shoot you!" moaned the woman.

"Sure he did! But it's all right. Even—a—greaser—can—pull a—trigger. I've—kept—clean—Nellie."

The man on the floor was dead.

The man on the couch spoke.

"You might as well get up out of that mess, Helen," he said harshly. "The curtain's down, and it's time to clear the stage. If any other of your old lovers comes around he's liable to be treated in the same way."

He laid aside the revolver, and rose to his feet. His eyes kindled and he resumed exultantly:

"Fifteen hundred dollars! Do you see? We take the reward. Now I'll get well, absolutely well! We can go to California. All we have to do is to produce this body, claim the money, and skip. We'll pack up in the morning, and leave the cabin to be sold. No more of this altitude for *me*, keeping me weak and run down, thank heaven! Get up! If I hadn't shot him somebody else would. I hated to do it—but it meant for me California. You'll see how quick I'll improve out there, away from this altitude. Why, three months—three months——"

The relentless cough strangled him, and pressed him, exhausted, to the couch again.

The woman stood upright, and lifted rigid arms and staring eyes.

"Oh, God!" she cried.



THE POINT OF VIEW

THE PLATITUDINIST—What a small world it is, to be sure!

THE OTHER FELLOW—That depends on whether you're trying to dodge a creditor or to walk three blocks in a pair of new shoes.

THE LURE OF JUNE

NOW'S the time to place empirics
 On the shelf where they belong;
 Now's the time for love and lyrics,
 Time for laughter and for song!
 Down each winding upland alley
 Blooms the blushing eglantine,
 And from valley back to valley
 Thrushes cry, "Be mine! be mine!"

Now's the time for meadow measures—
 Linnets by the lake and ling;
 Now's the time for pastoral pleasures,
 Summer marrying with spring!
 Skies above a sapphire wonder;
 Leas below like golden seas
 Wide outspread with perfumed plunder
 For the armies of the bees.

Now's the time for honeyed blisses,
 When the south winds droop and drowse;
 Now's the time for lovers' kisses
 Stolen under maple boughs!
 Hark!—the love-notes of the starling,
 Clear and pure and passionate!
 Let us not delay, my darling,
 To make answer to his call!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



NOT HIS FAULT

"YOU married me for my money!" wailed the angry wife.
 "Don't blame me for that," growled the cold-blooded husband. "I
 didn't know how else to get at it."



NEVER DECLINES

SPUNGER—I can drink any quantity of champagne!
 HIS FRIEND—Yes, any given quantity.

THE INVALUABLE POSTLEWAITE

By L. H. Bickford

“AND Postlewaite,” said Peter as if in afterthought, although he had held Mrs. Carton’s note throughout the conversation, “your services are again in demand.”

Postlewaite came back to the table, standing stiffly.

“Mrs. Carton, I presume, sir?”

“Yes, Mrs. Carton writes that she is in a state of mind over her little after-opera supper next Tuesday. She wonders if you couldn’t help her man Wilkins out—as you did last week. Between us, I don’t believe Wilkins will ever please Mrs. Carton as a butler.”

Postlewaite smiled gravely and sweetly.

“I fear not, sir. He is an ordinary man, with little experience in families. He came, sir, from a restaurant.”

“Just so,” assented Peter. “I do not know how you feel about being loaned out, as it were, Postlewaite”—he recalled a phrase in the note: “Postlewaite is a dear—he knows just what to do and there is never any trouble, everything goes off well.”

Again the grave and sweet smile of the valet.

“Anything to oblige you, I’m sure, sir. Of course, it interferes with my duties here, Mr. Vanthorpe, as you must know, and sometimes I feel that you are slighting yourself for your friends, if I may say so.”

“It is a nuisance now and then,” acknowledged Peter. There was the last loan of Postlewaite, when he had remained three days at Mrs. Morton’s, training her new house servants, while

Peter’s clothes were sadly in need of attention.

“And I do not forget,” continued the employer of this valued servant, “that you have any number of chances of bettering yourself. Still, I prefer loaning you to losing you, Postlewaite.”

“I would not care to go elsewhere permanently,” admitted the invaluable. “I really would not, sir. And, naturally, I would prefer to serve you exclusively. I have never been better situated.”

“Just so,” said Peter again. “It must be an infernal nuisance being sent to people’s houses as a sort of first aid to the socially helpless. But that’s the penalty of doing well what you lay your hand to, isn’t it, Postlewaite?”

“It is better,” declared Postlewaite, with great solemnity, “to be a good servant than a poor financier.”

And again Peter said, “Just so.” Then Postlewaite greatly surprised him.

“And if it’s all the same, sir, I really would prefer to go out less. As I have said, Mr. Vanthorpe, anything to oblige you, and if Mrs. Carton cannot get the right servants, or if Mrs. Ginning doesn’t know how to manage a dinner for twenty, and that sort of thing, I’m only too pleased to step in, at your orders. I have had some very hearty compliments, and the largess is not to be considered trifling—in fact, your friends have been quite generous—but——”

Postlewaite paused. He was, for once, quite embarrassed.

"You mean you do not care about being 'bossed,' as we say, by so many people?"

"It's not that exactly," said the invaluable. "It's something that has happened to me."

Peter started.

"Great heavens, Postlewaite, you're not—you're not going to be married? You're not in love?"

Postlewaite smiled wanly.

"I'm afraid it's worse, Mr. Vanthorpe. It's something I can't quite explain. It's——"

He hesitated, then drew from one of his pockets a square little box. This he gave to Peter, who raised the lid and drew from a nest of white tissue paper a diamond bracelet. Peter stared, turning the ornament over and over.

"Just so," he said blankly.

"A bracelet, sir. Miss Carsonby's bracelet."

"Exactly," said Peter. "But how came you by it?"

"I stole it," said Postlewaite, without turning a hair or raising his voice.

"You stole it? Oh, come now, Postlewaite. You cannot expect me to believe that. Nobody doubts your honesty. Why, if you were that sort you might have made away with a ton or two of somebody's silverware long before this. Miss Carsonby dropped it and you picked it up, perhaps. Or it was given you to keep for a time—perhaps the family safe was inaccessible. There are a lot of good reasons why you should have it."

"There is no good reason, I am afraid, sir. It is all very mysterious to me, but there is no doubt I took it the night I was sent for to help out with the orchid dinner at the Carsonbys'. If I might explain——"

"By all means," burst out Peter. "Tell me everything, man."

Postlewaite lowered his voice.

"I was passing through the upper hall while they were at dinner. I had gone to the room at the top of the house where I was told to place my suit-case. And as I came down, and

along the hall—there are bedchambers on either side—I passed Miss Carsonby's room. I just glanced in and on the floor near the dresser I saw this. There was nobody about, and I stepped in and picked it up. I put it in my pocket and went on downstairs. I kept it all evening, and when I came home next day I placed it in this box, as you see. That was a week ago."

"Why," cried the astonished Peter, "why did you take it—what did you want with it?"

"I have no use in the world for it," said Postlewaite dejectedly. "The thing fascinated me—I could no more resist carrying it off than I could resist sleep after I had been up all night. I just had to take it. And after I came home, sir, I wanted to run back with it—and I was afraid."

Peter's thoughts ran wild while he tore Mrs. Carton's note into bits.

"You were right, there," he said; "you couldn't have done that, with such an explanation. But the Carsonbys must have missed it."

The invaluable looked helplessly about him.

"That's the worst of it, sir. They believe Miss Carsonby lost it. It wasn't missed until four days ago, so I learned from Miss Carsonby's maid. Nobody in the house can be reasonably suspected of robbery, and Miss Carsonby is careless about her jewels. But it is all very serious for me, sir, since it lies on my conscience, and most of all makes me fear that I am not to be trusted to go about into people's houses, even if my services are sought."

"Oh, pooh!" cried Peter, for want of something to say, "pooh!"

"Especially," continued Postlewaite, "as it is not the first time this has occurred."

Peter flung the bits of paper into the air and sank back in his chair.

"Not the first time?" he repeated.

"Not—the—first—time?"

Postlewaite regarded him gravely.

"I told you it was serious, sir. It has been growing on me. It is something I cannot account for. I

walk my room, thinking about it, fearing what I may do next."

Peter revived.

"Sit down, Postlewaite," he said, "and tell me everything."

Postlewaite preferred to stand. Peter insisted. In the end the invaluable sat very far to the front of a rocking-chair, facing Peter.

"The first time I was afflicted—for I think I may say it is something like a disease—was when we were at the Kirklands', in the country. Your apartment was next to that of old Mr. Kirkland, as you may remember, sir. Well—it was the second evening and the gentlemen were all in the billiard-room—I had been arranging your luggage when something seemed to urge me to step into Mr. Kirkland's bedchamber. Directly I opened the door my eyes fell on a large solitaire diamond stick-pin that Mr. Kirkland sometimes wears in his cravat—and which I have heard remarked about as very poor taste, if I may say so, although old gentlemen do about as they please. It is a very precious stone, at any rate. I stood just inside the doorway and looked at it for a very long time, and then—then I walked in and took it. And I had it when we left, two days after. And then I found it was a burden, sir, and one day I got away and went back by an afternoon train, and under plea that you had left your office keys in the room you had occupied I entered the house and replaced the pin. I placed it in Mr. Kirkland's bureau. He was wearing it in town the other day, and if he missed it at all, I suppose he came to the conclusion that he had mislaid it."

Postlewaite sighed. His manner was the manner of one steeped in sorrow; his matter was wholly convincing.

"And the next occasion?" asked Peter.

"Was before I took Miss Carsonby's bracelet. You had asked me to call at the club for some papers Mr. Allenby left there for you. I was told you were in the reading-room, but that

was a mistake, for you had been to the club yourself and had seen Mr. Allenby. But I went into the reading-room and found but one occupant, Colonel Sanderson. He was asleep in a chair beside a window, and—you may believe me or not, sir, ordinarily I wouldn't have more than noticed him—all at once I was attracted by a diamond ring that was slipping off the little finger of his right hand, his arm being thrown over the chair arm."

"You took the ring?"

"I simply couldn't resist taking it."

"But I remember something about that. Colonel Sanderson supposed he had lost it, and there was a notice posted. Later he found the ring in his room in the club."

"I managed to get into his room," explained Postlewaite, "through an excuse that you had sent me there. And the next time—the next was this matter of the bracelet, sir."

Postlewaite then sat in silence, a pathetic figure. That he suffered was evident. That his story was to be believed Peter did not doubt.

"It is simply amazing," declared Peter presently. "If I didn't know you so well, Postlewaite—but have you never been tempted to take anything of mine?"

"I seem to be attracted only by jewels," confessed the invaluable. "You sometimes have a great deal of money lying about, but that never tempts me. Money never tempts me. And I don't know that you would call this—this other a temptation more than is meant wanting to take the jewels. I am ever so put out until they are restored."

Restored! The word brought Peter's thoughts back to the white box.

"Just so," he exclaimed; "Miss Carsonby must have her bracelet."

"I have tried twice," confessed Postlewaite, "and failed. When I called on her maid the other day I could invent no excuse to go to Miss Carsonby's room, and of course I couldn't just drop it anywhere. And

then Miss Carsonby went to Boston and I waited at the train, intending to get it into her luggage some way—you had sent me with a box of flowers—but there were some young ladies to see her off and I couldn't reach her traveling-bag because of them. And it would have been odd to place the bracelet in the box of flowers——”

“It would have been senseless,” exclaimed Peter. “Miss Carsonby would have concluded that I had taken her bracelet by way of a joke—and I am not a practical joker.”

“Just what I considered, sir.”

“But did you sound Miss Carsonby's maid about the bracelet? You say they do not think it was stolen——”

“They think it was lost, sir. There is a reward offered in the *Herald*.”

Postlewaite produced a newspaper clipping and Peter read it with interest. Then, for him, the situation cleared.

“You must leave the box at the newspaper office, Postlewaite,” he said. “That is the simplest way out—I wonder it did not occur to you.”

“It did, sir,” Postlewaite hesitated, “but I write a very poor hand, and I was in doubt about addressing the wrapper.”

“As for that,” said Peter, “I will address it for you.”

“Thank you, sir.”

The invaluable brought the ink while Peter tied the little parcel; and, the address accomplished, Postlewaite sighed in relief as he started for the door. There he paused.

“About Mrs. Carton, sir? Should I assist her man Wilkins—now that you know about my unfortunate weakness?”

“We cannot disappoint Mrs. Carton, Postlewaite. But I would suggest that you strive to overcome your—er—weakness. You were right to come to me. Perhaps confession will set you right.”

“Yes, sir,” said Postlewaite. “I hope so, sir—and thank you.”

Miss Carsonby had returned from Boston and sat beside Peter at Mrs.

Carton's opera-supper. She wore the bracelet, as Peter noted with satisfaction, and it was her only ornament. He had often wondered why she wore this solitary bauble, and he was somewhat startled to hear her say, almost immediately they had taken their places:

“Postlewaite into the breach again!”

“Then you know?” he stammered.

“I know that he's back of about everything Mrs. Carton does in this line,” she declared. “I see Postlewaite in the table arrangements, in the color scheme, and—yes, in the terrapin. He has been consulted in everything.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Peter in a tone of relief.

“I sometimes wonder that you let him out as you do—but you're always willing to be imposed upon, Peter.”

Peter murmured that it was really no imposition.

“And it cannot be denied that he's clever. Postlewaite is one of the men, even though in humble station, who do a great deal of good in the world. He is a rock in the social sea on which to climb and spread luncheons and dinners. Some of our newcomers would perish without him. I only wish”—Miss Carsonby was looking across the table—“that some of them would ask his advice on what to wear as well as what to eat.”

Her voice sank to a confidential tone that exempted all about her save Peter. As he followed her glance he felt strangely disturbed. Mrs. Jenkinson glittered across the table in diamonds rivaling the electric illuminations. Was it merely coincidence that Miss Carsonby had mentioned Postlewaite and indicated a jewel display? Was it? Of course, Peter told himself, when Miss Carsonby immediately changed the subject.

But he was unhappy. The incident disturbed him and he began to wonder if Postlewaite's strange affliction might not overcome him in the presence of so much that was dazzling. If a mere ring, on the hand of a sleeping man, tempted him; if a dia-

mond bracelet and a scarf pin were lures, what of Mrs. Jenkinson's diamonds? And so, even with the music of Miss Carsonby's voice in his right ear, Peter did not enjoy the supper. He was abstracted, uncommunicative, unresponsive.

"It is awful, I assure you," he said finally to Miss Carsonby, who had chided him for his inattention, "to have a train of thought. I beg your pardon, but you see you put something into my head, and—well, I couldn't get it out. I am not myself this evening. And then the opera was 'Aida,' and it always makes me melancholy."

"After all, that's rather nice of you, Peter," replied Miss Carsonby. "It is something to put a train of thought into anybody's head. Only, I trust it is a limited train and not what they call a 'mixed.' Did you ever ride in a 'mixed'? Papa says——"

She was the daughter of a railway president and had often charmed Peter by her father's anecdotes, told second-hand. And Peter had often laughed at the anecdotes. Even now he was becoming interested in the incident of the mixed train and the suburban party and was prepared for the dénouement when he looked across the board and was horror-stricken. For, glancing up from the Jenkinson necklace to the tiara in the Jenkinson hair, he observed that the latter was suddenly transferred to the palm of a man's hand. And Postlewaite was directly behind Mrs. Jenkinson, with a champagne bottle poised. He was looking directly into Peter's eyes. An instant later he turned quickly about—after filling Mrs. Jenkinson's glass—and then the lights in the dining-room were suddenly extinguished.

When Snifely, the detective from Tinkerton's, called on Peter the following afternoon he met a man who was greatly upset, but Snifely did not wonder over this since the other guests at Mrs. Carton's opera-supper, on whom he had also called, were similarly upset. The detective approached the sub-

ject soothingly. Peter remembered, as Miss Carsonby and Mrs. Jenkinson and Miss Gadsby and Mr. Oakley—and, indeed, all—had remembered, that those at table were busy with the terrapin when the room was plunged in darkness. He remembered that Mrs. Jenkinson had screamed, that somebody had pressed open the door leading into Mrs. Carton's observatory, that there was great confusion, and that, in the midst of it, the lights blazed out again. And he remembered that of all within the room only Postlewaite showed presence of mind and freedom from panic. For Postlewaite, who had been pushed against the sideboard, cried "Thief!" directly the lights were renewed and rushed into the conservatory followed by the guests—including Mrs. Jenkinson, who had lost her necklace and her tiara, and Miss Gadsby, who had lost her brooch, and Mr. Parker, of Chicago, who had lost the largest diamond ever a man wore in his shirt front. And Postlewaite had discovered the open window through which the thief undoubtedly escaped, and everybody had looked through it while Mrs. Carton became hysterical, and Mr. Carton swore everybody into secrecy, lest the incident find its way to the newspapers. And after Mrs. Carton had calmed and the Tinkertons had been notified by telephone, Peter had come home.

And Postlewaite? Yes, it was true he had been keeled over by the bandit invader when the lights went out, as had Wilkins, Mrs. Carton's butler, and John, his assistant. Wilkins, indeed, had cut his forehead on the glass on the sideboard, and there was a large bump on Postlewaite's head which Mr. Snifely had doubtless examined the night before. Postlewaite had grappled with the bandit, and this was the result. As for his remaining at the Cartons', that was by Mrs. Carton's request.

All this Mr. Snifely knew before he reached Peter. The guests at the party had about the same general story. It had been a bewildering experience. Snifely asked some ques-

tions about Postlewaite which Peter answered definitely.

Name? Henry John Postlewaite.

Age? About forty, Peter judged, although he never questioned his valet on that subject.

Habits? Of the best.

Former service? Well, Peter had him from Johnnie Templeton, who had him at college, and beyond that he had served Lord Somebody before coming to this country.

In general? Peter could not speak too highly of Postlewaite. He was in demand everywhere. He seemed to know just what to do. Ask anybody to whom he had been loaned, Mrs. Carton in particular. The preposterous idea of involving him in the matter, anyway! Did Postlewaite come in the front door—which was shown to have been open—walk through a corridor, switch off the lights and then knock himself down, after he had been all the time in the room? Ridiculous! Had not Mr. Snifely and his brother Tinkerton searched the servants the night before, within an hour after the thing happened? Could \$50,000 worth of jewels—was the value indeed so great?—be suddenly secreted by Postlewaite or Wilkins or John? And more. Defending Postlewaite's character until Snifely reminded him that he was merely forced to "look into all phases of the case" Peter became positively eloquent. After Snifely had gone he wondered how he had brought himself to this defense. He knew he was a sort of accessory after the fact, and yet—well, Postlewaite was not inherently a criminal. He was possessed of a strange disease—the unhappy victim of an impulse he could not control. Peter would hear his story, and never again should Postlewaite go about to be tempted by the glitter of gems.

Withal, Peter was curious. How had his valet contrived this affair? Three days passed before the question was answered. Mrs. Carton had refused, once by note and twice by telephone, to release Postlewaite while the absurd Tinkertons were harassing

her household. It would be a reflection on Postlewaite's honesty—and his head such a sight, too. As for her confidence in Postlewaite, if Peter would only relinquish him she was certain he would be a decided acquisition for her.

The invaluable came home on the fourth day. He was waiting when Peter returned from business and followed his master to the library, where, after the door had been locked, he placed several parcels on the table and stood meekly at attention. Peter sank in a chair and crossed his hands.

"This time, Postlewaite," he said, "this time, I must say, you have made a pretty mess of it."

The invaluable blinked.

"I knew I would do it, sir. I knew it when I saw Mrs. Jenkinson come in with that man from Chicago. I was overcome, sir. If you was ever tempted by marbles, Mr. Vanthorpe, you'd have some understanding."

"Marbles?" repeated Peter, for this seemed far from the subject. "Marbles?"

"When I was a boy, Mr. Vanthorpe, I envied every boy his marbles. It made no difference that I had marbles, too—all sorts and beautiful ones. Whatever they were they never seemed to be quite as desirable as those possessed by others. And when I could not make a trade I would just knock down the other boy and take his away from him. Or if he was a larger boy I would bide my time and steal them. And yet I didn't care for these other marbles after I got them. It just seemed as if I wanted them because they were not mine. And it's that way now about the diamonds. Mr. Vanthorpe, sir, it's an awful affliction."

"It is a terrible affliction," acknowledged Peter, "and the worst of it is, Postlewaite, it's likely to cost you something some day. It would be far cheaper for you to have appendicitis, and less scandalous." He looked over the packages. "I would like to know, my man, where you hid these jewels when you turned out the lights

—I do not ask as a matter of curiosity, but simply to get the affair straight in my mind."

"It was very simple, sir. I just dropped them into the salad that stood on the sideboard. It was a fruit salad, the kind that Mrs. Carton has a hobby for. After the—after the excitement nobody wanted any salad, and by the time the detectives came the dish was in the kitchen."

"Just so," said Peter. "And after that? You must have been rather closely watched all the time you stopped at Mrs. Carton's, after the detectives came. And I suppose you know you've been one of the suspects."

"After the salad-bowl, they got into the bean-barrel. They have since been in the bean-barrel—until this morning, when the detectives left, and I got these boxes and slipped the jewels in them. If I may say so, sir, the question is what to do about it."

"There is just one thing to do about it," said Peter positively, "and that is to return them."

"As we did Miss Carsonby's bracelet, sir?"

"We?" Peter raised his eyebrows. "Really, Postlewaite——!"

"I beg pardon, sir. But you have been so kind—in Miss Carsonby's case and in protecting me in this. It was a slip of the tongue."

"Exactly," said Peter impatiently. For a time he was lost in thought.

"After all," he remarked, "I suppose the easiest way is the simplest. It isn't usual to trust valuable gems to the uncertainties of the mail, but we—that is, you, Postlewaite—must take no personal risk. I will address these packages for you and you must drop them into the post-office."

And really, he concluded, he must see Postlewaite out of this. Afterward, he would take steps to safeguard the invaluable against these extraordinary attacks. He would keep him at home. No entreaty would cause him to swerve. Postlewaite's days of being loaned were over.

So Peter's simple plan went into

effect and Postlewaite departed with a light heart. In all charity, it is hoped that his heart was light since his conscience could not have been. For six weeks afterward Postlewaite left the service of Peter, against all entreaty, to sail over the seas. There came a time in every normal man's life, said Postlewaite, when it was no longer natural, or scriptural, to live alone. And there awaited him—and, it appeared, had awaited him all along—a divinity in the land of his nativity. And he was very sorry to go—very sorry indeed, sir.

Once since Peter has seen Postlewaite. He glimpsed him in a carriage in Rome two years after this, and Postlewaite appeared portly, prosperous and contented. Possibly he was doing the world, as was Peter. For Peter had become quite a traveler.

It would have pleased him if Postlewaite's carriage had stopped. He had something to say to the invaluable, something that would have relieved him. "For," thought Peter, "there goes a man who cost me thousands of dollars, once on a time——"

And his memory went back to the day that Snifely, the Tinkerton, called with certain addresses cut from certain wrappers on certain packages and asked him if he recognized the handwriting. And he recalled Snifely's wonder story of the thief who had gained access to the best houses through being a valet for a gentleman who was accommodating, and who had made a pot of money through a system that was most unusual. Results were always successful, for the system included not only the theft of diamonds in necklaces, brooches and pins, but the substitution of bogus gems for the originals through a rascally confederate who was an expert lapidarist. And when the lapidarist had removed the real stones and replaced them with so much crystal, the ornaments were returned to their owners in a mysterious manner. Snifely called it the cleverest swindle he had known in his

professional career, since the thieves had operated in a set that had no reason to doubt the genuineness of the gems that had been returned, even though marveling at the method.

"And if it hadn't been for a man from Chicago," Snifely told Peter, "the deception would never have become known—and, for that matter, I don't know that it is known very generally now. But the Chicago man, he got hard up, and when he found his blazer was a two-spot in a pawnshop he just looked us up and—well, we've been investigating, Mr. Vanthorpe, just where we dropped off when Mrs. Carton told us to because her guests had received their diamonds back through the mails. And we've found that a lot of people in New York are wearing imitation diamonds, although they don't know it. And the handwriting on the wrappers—"

Peter understood. He thanked heaven he was a very rich man. He knew that the Tinkertons never slept, and all that. And, of course, there was no necessity for stirring up a mess with Postlewaite safely out of

the country. But Snifely would surely understand his, Peter's, situation, and jolly embarrassing it was. If it could be arranged for the Chicago man to accept a lump sum of the value of the original diamond—now that would be something. And if Mrs. Jenkinson could be induced to part with her famous tiara and necklace which had been greatly admired by an unknown connoisseur, that would be more. Again, this unknown had a fancy for a bracelet worn by Miss Carsonby, a brooch owned by Miss Gadsby and a certain stick-pin and diamond ring. With a proper commission, Mr. Snifely might know how to arrange these matters. Of course, when Peter addressed the wrappers he had no idea—

Mr. Snifely was human. The transactions took time, and Miss Carsonby absolutely refused to surrender the bracelet, which was a family heirloom. In the end, however, she came to share Peter's secret, since she is now Mrs. Vanthorpe—and no longer wears the ornament she was wont to display.



A FRIEND IN NEED

DECEMBER 1, 1904.

EDITOR *Sunny Smile*,
DEAR SIR:

I trust that in the kindness of your heart you will accept the inclosed manuscript. Its acceptance means much to me, as I am the sole support of a bed-ridden mother-in-law, and my resources are exhausted. If I do not sell the story she will starve.

Yours very truly,

JOHN J. JONES.

JANUARY 1, 1905.

EDITOR *Sunny Smile*,

UNKNOWN, BUT DEAR FRIEND:

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for declining my manuscript. My mother-in-law starved.

Yours in eternal gratitude,

JOHN J. JONES.

ACROSS THE COURTYARD

By Bliss Carman

THAT is the window over there
With the closed shutters and the air
Of a deserted place, like those
Abandoned homesteads whose repose
Haunts us with mystery. Inside
Who knows what tragedy may hide?

This window has been sealed up so
A fortnight now. A month ago
Just about dusk you should have seen
The vision I saw smile and lean
From that same window. Spring's return,
When daffodils and jonquils burn
Under the azure April day,
Is not more lovely nor more gay.

The world—at least, our artist world
Where tubes are pinched and brushes twirled
In the long task to reproduce
God's masterpieces for man's use—
Knows Jacynth for the loveliest
Of all its models and the best.
Why, half the portraits in the town,
From Mrs. Bigwig, Jr.'s down,
Have that same perfect taper hand,
(If you have wit to understand
A woman's vanity, you know
Why they should wish to have it so),
Those same long fingers smooth and round,
Faultless as petals, and not found
Twice in a generation. Well,
They're Jacynth's. But you need not tell
The trick. In this world art must live
On what the world's caprice will give.

Delightful folly! But far more
Delightful beauty we adore
And follow humbly day by day,
Her difficult, enchanted way.
(Dear beauty, still beyond the reach
Of paint, or music, or of speech!)
We toil and triumph and despair,
Then on a morn look up, and there

THE SMART SET

Some girl goes by, or there's a dash
Of color on the clouds—a flash
Of inspiration caught between
Chinks in the workshop's gray routine;
One hint of glory through the murk,
And God has criticized our work.

So we plod on, and so one day
It happened toward the end of May,
When the long twilight comes, and when
Our northern orchards bloom again—
Even our poor old courtyard tree,
Knowing the time that bids him be
One of the hosts that leaf and sing
In the revival of the spring,
Dons his green robe of joy. You know
How idle, then, a man will grow.
I had been sitting lost in thought
Of how our best dreams come to naught,
And we are left mere daubers still
For want of knowledge, lack of skill—
So many of us are, I mean!
The door was open, and the screen
And curtains turned back everywhere
For the first breath of summer air,
That came in like a wanderer
From far untroubled lands, to stir
The prints along the wall, and bring
Our dreams of greatness back with spring.

Suddenly, I looked up, aware
Before I looked, of someone there—
You know how. In the doorway stood
A tall girl dressed in black. How good
A scrap of actual beauty is,
After our unrealities!
The copper-colored hair; the glint
Of tea-rose in her throat's warm tint;
The magic and surprise that go
With level blue-gray eyes; the slow
Luxurious charm of poise and line,
Half oriental, half divine,
And altogether human. Oh,
One must have known her then, to know
How faultless beauty still transcends
The bound where faultless painting ends.
But you may gather here and there
Faint glimpses and reports of her
In the best work of all the men
Who painted her as she was then,
Splendid and wonderful. To me,
For color and for symmetry.
In her young glory there she seemed
The flame-like one of whom they dreamed

Who worshiped beauty in old days
With singleness of joy and praise;
Some great Astarte come to bless
This old world with new loveliness;
My own ideal come to life,
After the failure and the strife,
To prove I dreamed not all in vain
In poverty beside the Seine.

There came a sudden leap at heart
That made my pulses stop and start,
The surge and flood of sense that sweep
Over our nature's hidden deep,
When we look up and recognize
Our vision in an earthly guise.
Then reason must resign control
To the indubitable soul,
Put off despair, arise and dance
To the joy-music of romance.

For one great year she posed for me;
Came in and out familiarly,
And made the studio her home
Almost—not quite; for always some—
What shall I say?—reserve or pride,
Mysterious and aloof, belied
By the soft loving languorous mien,
Invested her, enthroned serene
Above importunings. Who knows,
If she had chosen as I chose—
Flung heart and head and hand away
On the great venture of a day;
Poured love and passion and romance
In the frail mold of circumstance—
Had she but dared be one of two,
We might have made the world anew!
However much it might have cost,
Who knows what good may have been lost,
What passing great reward?

One day
When work was done she turned to say
Her soft good night, and tripped down stair
With rustling skirts and her fine air
Of breeziness, humming a catch
From some street-song. I heard the latch
Click after her, and she was gone.
Next day I waited. It wore on
To afternoon, and still no sign
Of peril near this dream of mine.
A year went by, and not a word
Of the lost Jacynth could be heard.

May came again; the wind once more
Was blowing by the open door,

And I saw something over there
Across the yard that made me stare.
Strangers had recently arrived
On that third floor, and Fate contrived
One of her small dramatic scenes
Which make us wonder what life means,
And whether it is all a play
For our diversion by the way.
There at the window I caught sight
Of a girl's figure. The crisp white
Of the fresh gown passed and repassed,
Strangely familiar, till at last,
"Jacynth, of course! Who else?" I cried.
And on the instant she espied
Me watching her; quick as a flash
And smiling, ran, threw up the sash
To lean far out. "How do you do,
My friend?" "Why, Jacynth, how are you,
After this long, long time?" I said.
"Thank you, quite well." Her pretty head
Was tilted up, in every line
An old medallion rare and fine.
"Yes, it's a long time, isn't it,
Since that first day I came to sit
For your great Lilith? Tell me how
They hung it at the Fair. And now
That we are neighbors once again,
Do come to see me." It was plain
From the unwonted vanity
Of tone, as she ran on to me,
Some strange ambition, plan, or hope
Had come to give her pride new scope.
Somehow she had acquired the chill
Of worldliness; I missed the thrill
Of eager radiance she had
When we were comrades free and glad.
Some volatile and subtle trace
Of soul had vanished from her face,
Leaving the brilliancy that springs
From polished and enameled things.
The beauty of the lamp still shone
With luster, but the flame was gone.

There was so evident in her
The smug complacent character
Of prosperous security,
That when, with just a flick at me,
She added, gaily as before,
"It isn't Jacynth any more,
It's Mrs."—someone—here was I,
Too much astonished to reply,
Before she vanished. From that day
The rest is blank, think what you may.
There is her window, as you see,
Closed on a teasing mystery.

I think, as I recall her here,
 How much life means beyond the mere
 Safety, convenience, and the pose
 Respectability bestows;
 The beauty of the questing soul
 In every face, beyond control
 Is dimmed by wearing any mask
 That dull conformity may ask.
 How almost no one understands
 The unworldliness that art demands!
 How few have courage to retain
 Through years of doubtful stress and strain
 The resolute and lonely will
 To follow beauty, to fulfil
 The dreams of their prophetic youth
 And pay the utmost price of truth!
 How few have nerve enough to keep
 The trail, and thread the dark and steep
 By the lone lightning-flash that falls
 Through sullen murky intervals!
 How many faint of heart must choose
 The steady lantern for their use,
 And never, without fear of Fate
 Be daring, generous and great!

Where is she now? What sudden change
 Clouded our daydream? Love is strange!



MISTOOK HIS MEANING

JACK—That Miss Shapeleigh is a mighty good swimmer.

TOM—Yes; that's her long suit.

"Great Scott! She doesn't wear anything shorter, does she?"



DEFINITIONS

THE SIMPLE LIFE—Doing your own work.

THE STRENUOUS LIFE—Doing some other fellow's work.

THE MODERN LIFE—Getting some other fellow to do your work.

THE LATE LAMENTED "ALAS!"

IT is but seldom, nowadays, that we encounter that once familiar acquaintance, the poor old hollow-chested ejaculation, "Alas!" Not many years ago it was so popular that nearly everybody employed it more or less frequently. Indeed, some people got so in the way of using it that they did very little of anything else.

In days ago the lovelorn maiden waited long for her recreant lover, and pined slowly away, remarking "Alas!" at appropriate intervals till a short time prior to the arrival of the undertaker. Many excellent but rectangular ladies, who were afflicted with the good old long-drawn variety of consumption once so fashionable, divided their time about equally saying "Alas!" and snarling like Spitz dogs, until they finally wore out all their immediate relatives and died triumphant at green old ages, the last of their respective names. The Third Reader of our school days was literally infested with the pale lad, whose threadbare raiment and bulging brow were sadly patched but very neat and clean, who excused his inability to remain and converse with the bearded stranger by explaining that his father alas had been lost at sea and his mother alas had married again on two different occasions, and the family alas now consisted of himself, his mother, three sisters and two brothers, together with one half-sister and two half-brothers who were the fruits of his mother's second marriage, and four assorted offsprings who had been brought home by his first stepfather and left there to be cared for while he went forth to walk forevermore on the glory-lit hills of immortality, besides a bunch of triplets and one odd child, the third husband's contribution to the collection, amounting, in round numbers, to fifteen and one-half children and one and one-half grown folks, his stepfather alas having lost his leg and being but little better than half a man in various other ways; and it has kept the lad pretty tolerably busy alas to provide the various tribes and half tribes with food and raiment, especially as times were uncommonly hard alas and he could get nothing to do but odd jobs at digging cisterns. In fact, "Alas!" was used by all sorts and conditions of people and in various ways; generally by lazy folks and through the nose.

It was indicative of a supine resignation which is out of fashion today. We are more strenuous and less docile than we used to be. The sigh has to a great extent given place to the snort, and most of us prefer "Hurrah!" to "Alas!" Nowadays, when trouble comes we have no time for repining. It is no longer regarded as good sense when the fat catches fire to sigh that alas it is burning us; we find it preferable to drop it and run.

It would seem that "Alas!" lapsed into desuetude from lack of use, something after the fashion in which the tail of the prehistoric man is said to have dropped off after its utility had ended. We ceased to need "Alas!" in our business, and it went to join the Great Auk and the Noble Red Man and the duel and eloquence and croquet and the blue-glass cure and the notion that the office should seek the man, and all the other fads and excrescences that have one by one sloughed off and fallen by the wayside, as we have come along down the corridors of time.

TOM P. MORGAN.



IT is always disastrous to take out the tucks and let down the hem of an old romance.

THE AFFAIR OF THE FIRE-ESCAPE

By Anna A. Rogers

A GREAT many years ago during a convalescing winter, when my soul was groping blindly about for some middle footing between complete ecstasy and complete despair, it came to pass that the fire-escape which ran up and down the back wall of my hotel, to the right of my one west window, became the most prominent feature of my cramped life.

The doctor ordered me to sit in the sun every day as much as possible, and he wheeled the armchair close to the only window into which the afternoon sun poured.

One cannot read every waking moment of a long day, and after the maid had finished the work in my room, there was no one else to speak to till the doctor came, except, of course, the bell-boys who brought up my meals, but as far as they were concerned it was like trying to take a personal interest in a composite photograph. I thought for a long time, until Kitty enlightened me, that there must be a great many bell-boys in the hotel, for I seldom saw the same face thrice. It seems that there were only a very few, after all, changed very often. So, in a few weeks I ceased to ask their names, ceased to fee them, ceased even to greet their sullen comings and goings. Bell-boys are the mysterious little nomads of city life in the adolescent throes of future professional vagabondage.

But Kitty, the Irish maid, was my one comfort; healthy and cheery and bonny to look at, with a voice and a brogue that acted upon my sensibilities like some miraculous phylactery; but I was unfortunately entitled to her

society only once a day. However, she used to slip in with the fresh towels about four o'clock, and that was something to look forward to.

The doctor was very abusive about my being so much alone, and said something about trying to make rope out of sand. Of course I could not explain, so I used to sit looking at him in a sort of dumb entreaty, until one day the tears suddenly welled up in my eyes and then he apologized very gently, and never again referred to my loneliness.

One afternoon, to my amazement, the fire-escape landing on the level with my window bloomed forth gaily with three bunches of flowers; long-stemmed American beauty roses in a pitcher, a great bunch of golden chrysanthemums laid in a basin, and in a tiny green glass vase a bunch of lilies-of-the-valley.

I amused myself by testing my powers of imagination as to the individual odor of those three familiar flowers twenty feet away across that walled chasm of brick. The coarse, luxurious perfume of that rose fairly tickled my nostrils; the strong, healthy pungency of the chrysanthemums; and then that exquisite freshness of the evanescent odor of the tiny bell-like lilies, which escapes after one unsatisfying whiff, leaving a longing for more and more, like kisses snatched in haste.

What would the doctor have thought had he known that his eccentric patient was guilty of such reflections as these, alone up in her tiny back room—always alone!

Of course he cannot dream what I was a brief five months ago, seeing only this pasty white face dragged down at

the mouth, the poor eyes dull as a fish's after the quick panting has ceased.

How is he to know of that black disaster that came out of a radiant sky, which burned up all there was of living in me, save only a great weariness? How is he to know that slowly the tardy, terrible knowledge has come to me that I could have loved that which I discarded forever?

There should have been another Beatitude for woman: Blessed is she who knoweth not a great love, for she shall be satisfied with little, and shall know peace instead. And I thought to myself with my eyes clinging to the flowers: "A woman lives in that room over there, and perhaps it's her birthday. Three people, at least, have remembered it—three! A wealth of friendship, that." And then I remembered, with that twitch of the lips which is about all I have left of my old smile, that I too had had a birthday which had passed unnoticed a week back, and the only thing that happened to mark it was that the doctor changed my medicine! Well, this last one is much easier to take—there's something in that to be thankful for.

But her life—the happy woman's over there by the fire-escape—has affection in it—affection! After all, that is what we women in the end long for; the gentle benediction of affection. Love is an agony, it is disease—mental, physical, moral disease! Affection is love's happy convalescence, full of the tingle of health and hope and sanity. But one cannot choose; love comes unasked, unannounced, as the light comes from a distant star destined ages ago some day to reach a human eye.

Then Kitty came in and my eyes, a little hungry for companionship, followed her about—for she was the only woman I saw, since I was rude to the housekeeper. I was forced to be, as her idea of friendliness was rooted in curiosity. Kitty was a great chatter-box, and as she stood dusting my growing colony of medicine bottles, she said:

"The lady in number a hund'ed-an'-wan, along the hall here, was tuk

that sick i' the night, m'm! Sure, was yer dishturbed, m'm? The watchman wint for her fri'nd on the t'ird flure at t'ree in the marnin'. It's sorry I am, for she's a nice la-a-dy, m'm."

"So it isn't her birthday!" I cried, and Kitty turned and looked at me with puzzled eyes—Kitty often looked at me like that—and then she went on with her gossip. I heard a woman's voice only once a day, so I had not the heart to stop her, and we had so few topics in common, Kitty and I.

As I sat watching her my old wonder returned, my old admiration for these sturdy, honest girls far from their homes, fighting bravely their life-battles, mere children in years, perilously alone. What mithridate protects them, when so many of the sheltered rest of us make wrecks of our lives?

"The ould gentleman in a hund'ed-an'-siven, he that do be flyin' the parakites from the roof on windy days an' writes grand books about 'em—now, I la've it to you, m'm, isn't that a sthrange thing for a grown man to be doin', m'm?—wull, he's that devoted to a hund'ed-an'-wan! He sint her some roses this marnin'—the langstimmed wans that do be costin' the most—why people be willin' to pay a dollar a fut for the stim alone is quoitte above me understhandin'!—an' a wee little tricksy of white wans he sint, too, m'm; not much to look at, but smellin' swate, like a baby after its bath of a marnin'. An' it was meself tuk 'em in to her, an' you'd art to see the face of her! Thim roses was pale beside it, m'm; but sure, 'twas the tup-penny-ha'penny little wans she liked the most! Mary Ann on the fust flure, she that's the longest here in the house, was tellin' me arl about it. She says there do be somethin' in the way of the weddin', for it's been goin' arn loike this for many an' many a year, m'm. An' sure she's gettin' no younger as the days go by! The watchman, he says to me, says he: 'Kitty,' says he, 'it's entoiirely her fault; he can't bring her up to the p'int. There's a few shy women lift,' says he, winkin' at Mary Ann. 'Go long wid yer,' says

she, 'her troussos is under the bed in a box! It's flyin' his parakites he is, with great schames in his head for makin' the gold to spend arn her—an' she, poor thing, is gettin' ould waitin' arn him an' the schames,' says Mary Ann."

There was no stopping Kitty now, and I simply did not dare offend her—the only woman who had touched me since that night! So I closed my eyes as if I had fallen asleep in the warm sunshine, my head on the back of the chair, and she tiptoed about the room and presently went away, sighing as she gently closed the door, "Poor little cruiskeen!"

When the doctor came he shook his head as soon as he saw my face, and he began once more to use that terrible word—sanatorium. But I begged for another fortnight's respite.

The flowers on the fire-escape looked faded the next day when I got to the window. Kitty said there had been a great change for the worse in the night, and a hundred-and-one was evidently too ill to take care of the blossoms—even of the lilies-of-the-valley. I felt sure of that, even before Kitty told me.

After I had had my nap, I crept over to the window again, and found that the faded flowers were gone and in their place a fresh bunch of lilies-of-the-valley. And I felt once more in accord with poor, erring, love-craving human nature, as I wondered if these too came from the old experimenter in aerostatics.

After that, day after day, I found on the fire-escape that fresh bouquet of lilies-of-the-valley. And it came convincingly to me that they stood for a man's helpless remorse, a dull masculine imagination harping in despair on one string.

And my heart went out to him and I knew that I, above all people, understood: he had sacrificed love to a chimera, and the terror that it was too late was upon him. And I envied him the privilege of that daily gift of white fragrance.

Then one morning another change

came. Kitty did not have to tell me, it was all there on the fire-escape, and I had but to divide the curtains and read the bulletin.

The flowers, faded or fresh, were alike swept away, and in their places were covered dishes, a bottle of milk, a glass of jelly with the round of paper partly cut, as if an effort had been made to tempt a feverish palate. I could see by the color that it was quince jelly, clear and beautiful as amber. It had been hastily placed below the window-sill out of sight, and soon out of recollection.

It was too late for flowers; the ugly, sordid fight was on between life and death—flowers only come at the beginning of an illness, and once more—at the end.

The careless way that the dishes were covered told the tale of an untrained hand, perhaps that of the willing but ignorant friend on the "t'ird flure."

Two days later there was another change, and again I told Kitty before she told me the sad meaning of it. The slackly covered dishes on the fire-escape were gone—all but the little glass of jelly hidden under the sill—and only a carefully sealed bottle of milk and a covered bowl of cracked ice were out on the fire-escape—a trained nurse had taken charge of the case. Flowers and friends and sentiment were barred out—it was the last round of the battle—to the death, this time—among paid professionals.

Once I saw the nurse's arms reach out for the bowl of ice. Strong, clean hands they were, the white sleeves rolled up to the elbow, and then she rapidly closed the window and disappeared. Snow had fallen; and then it had turned very cold, Kitty said. I did not know, for I never left my room—and she covered me up with blankets on the bed on sweeping days.

Then one day I was strangely moved by the sight of a man's face looking out from a window directly opposite mine, across the shaft. An old face, very white, and pinched and weary.

As I watched, my heart began to

beat in great thumps, and when Kitty came I said as quietly as I could:

"Where is a hundred-and-seven? On your floor?"

She was beside me instantly and swept back my sheltering curtain from across the window, and then shrinking back, she said what I knew she would say:

"Sure it's himself, m'm, acrost there! Look at the face uv 'im, an' the heart clane gone out uv 'im! The nurse is after tellin' me that it's 'pull Dick, pull devil,' says she to me, an' a shmile on the face uv her. Devil a bit do they care, m'm, the loike o' that!"

I was terribly moved and excited by this strange, close contact with nameless lives about me. Some of the ice around my own heart began to melt away, thrills ran through me as it must in springtime in the brown, dead twigs of a tree. Perhaps some day my leafage would return to me! Perhaps it was just a winter sleep with me, too—the good sap would run again in my veins! Ah, if I could but feel alive again, could cry heartbrokenly over the affair of the fire-escape; could laugh—laugh aloud at Kitty's brogue!

The doctor said the next day I had a degree of fever; I had been doing too much.

"Too much!" I fairly laughed at him and he looked at me in a startled way, just as Kitty does. He had been attending me for four months and he had never before heard me laugh.

I did not get as far as the window for three days after that. I have only a vague memory of those days. It seemed to me the doctor was there oftener than usual, and Kitty was very slow with her chamber-work. Several times I had an uncomfortable feeling of having listened to much talking, hour after hour. Could it have been the echo of my own voice! I was afraid to look into the doctor's eyes lest I should read my story there, so I laid with my face to the wall when he came; and then he went; I had only the ceaseless passing and repassing of the Elevated trains for company. They were two squares away, and I counted

between the trains breathlessly, and marveled that there were no more collisions, so dangerous were the variations in that thundering rhythm. Finally, to get away from this teasing obsession, I crawled up and put on my Japanese wadded wrapper that is Kitty's delight, and I crept over to my chair and huddled down among the soft wraps and cushions. Pushing aside the lace curtain, I peeped out.

My first glance was at the patch of sky, blue, opaque, with never a cloud to serve as a measure of distance. My second glance was at the fire-escape. Surely she was better, the place was packed with flowers once more! White roses and lilies and violets and ferns, long sprays of English ivy—what a pretty thought that was, to bring the world of green to shut-in eyes tired of walls and ceiling!

Then as I looked fear came slowly curling into my heart, as the fog does in at an open window. There was something different about all those flowers, arranged with a strange conventional stiffness. Surely the calla lilies were tied with—there was no doubt of it—broad white ribbon! The window was wide open—the affair of the fire-escape had ended! The fight was over, sentiment was once more allowed its helpless, foolish way with the dead.

I started up, overwhelmed with emotion, and sweeping the curtain further back, my eyes darted to the window opposite—the window of one-hundred-and-seven. A gray head was bowed on the window-sill, the face hidden in tense hands. And my spirit greeted his spirit, as must two souls in purgatory for the same sin.

As the curtain fell from my trembling hand, I caught sight of one of those trivial things that fasten themselves upon the biggest emotional moments. The little glass of jelly was still undiscovered on the fire-escape under the projecting sill; the circle of brown paper, still hinging on a little glue, was flapping about in the breeze; bobbing and nodding merrily, and then I began to laugh aloud. I do not

remember anything more till I found myself on the lounge, and heard Kitty sniffing beside me on her knees; the doctor in a chair on the other side, his fingers on my wrist.

All the dulness in my heart was gone, I was alive again, the old abnormal sensitiveness tingling through me. I could feel the bell-boy's eyes peering in at the door-crack, the housekeeper's sharp ones above his; and the first thing I said was:

"Close the door!"

I never could bear that housekeeper—never! It had come back to me, all my old trouble in some capacity to hate roundly. And to love soundly—had that also returned?

I looked at the doctor's gravely excited face, and then I beckoned him down to my pillow and whispered:

"Send Kitty away." I never could have said it to her myself, the fear was always present that she would not come again. I smiled at her as she arose, and I held out my hand and said:

"Kitty, you'll come in again by and bye? Please do, there's a good girl. I get so lonely, you know."

As she closed the door I cried to the doctor:

"Did I talk the other day in that fever?"

"Yes."

"What do you know of my story?"

"Practically nothing that I did not know before—that you were in a woman's mood which would change some day; has it come?"

I stared at him a moment, and then I struggled up on my pillows excitedly, the madness of long repression giving way to the madness of expression.

"Yes, doctor, it has come! I have been in a casing of ice all these months, and it has broken away. That woman's death in there—in the other room; that man's remorse! The love of living has come back to me; the love of loving, the very love of suffering—anything, rather than to be left alone in a room with the window wide open, with white lilies in my hands. I want to live—and I will take what goes with living!"

June 1905

"We thought to keep it from you—I gave stringent orders—I am sorry."

"Sorry? Ah, no, doctor—her death has been my rebirth. How strangely our lives are interlaced—psychically, I mean. She never heard of me and I never saw her, and yet—surely 'the secret things belong unto the Lord!'"

And then that fraud of a doctor sat there and listened to my story, and at the end took down an address, and all the time he knew it—every word of it!—knew that I had thrown aside a man's great love for what I called art; that early in the autumn the night came that was to justify me in my own eyes, and in the world's and in his; the night of my test; the packed house, the great orchestra behind me—for it was in the largest concert hall in the city—the blaze of light falling like sunshine on the flower-garden of the women's gowns beneath. All eyes and ears were mine if I did but satisfy them, all hearts mine if I did but thrill them with my voice.

And all in my white velvet and pearls, my head erect, every fibre in me sure of success, I went forth to my triumph. Those who loved me were there, faint with excitement, and *he* was there, sitting close to the stage. I first felt and then saw him—his face like wax, his eyes like stars—and then I failed!—hopelessly, utterly, irretrievably failed, and blackness came, and only sense enough left to deceive them all and fly through the night to this refuge where I have hidden from the world in one of the many hotels of this same great city; a little back room that looked out on a fire-escape.

The doctor had sat with his face turned away listening in silence. At the end of my story he faced me, and then I saw it all instantly; and after that he could do nothing with me. I sprang up, seized his arm and shook it, frantic with excitement.

"You know it—I did talk in the fever! There's no surprise in your eyes—you're too honest for the role, doctor! You have been to him. Tell me, has he forgiven me? Does he care a little yet? Tell me quickly."

"My poor child—my poor child!" was all the doctor had a chance to say over and over again—trying in vain to quiet me. And then someone knocked, and the doctor placed me on the lounge and went to the door, opened it, and stepped outside.

When he re-entered I watched him in dull amazement which turned to wrath as he gathered up his overcoat, his hat, his gloves in complete silence, and then approached me. A flash of temper ran through me—there was no doubt my old tumultuous self was fast returning!

"Are you going to leave me like this, without one word, alone?" I cried.

"You are not going to be left alone,"

he said standing, smiling down at me; "he's broken his promise—I wouldn't give a sixpence for a man who'd keep it! He says he will not wait another minute—he's—" The doctor pointed toward the door, his eyes full of mischief. And then I knew all I wanted to know, and the first thing I did was to put my hands up to my disheveled head, and the first thing I said was:

"Doctor, I must have either Kitty or a hand-glass!" I can hear his laugh yet as he exclaimed:

"You shall have both!" And then he went out, and a little later Kitty went too; and then the other came in, and a great peace with him.



MAY FLOWERS

MAY flowers on the city street—
A keen-faced vender sells, with eyes
Fitted for coarser merchandise
Than these pathetic bits of sweet
That breathe of vague simplicities.

May flowers on the city street—
Here where the tide of traffic roars
Against its narrow, crowded shores
Where men go by with hurrying feet
And barter swings its thousand doors.

May flowers on the city street—
Why, 'tis as though the young-eyed spring
Herself had come—an artless thing,
A country lass demure and neat,
To smile upon us, wondering.

May flowers on the city street—
Pink and white poetry abloom
Here in this clamor, crush and gloom—
A home thought in the battle's heat,
A love song in a sunless room.

May flowers on the city street—
For one poor coin, behold! I buy
Springtime and youth and poetry,
E'en in this sordid mart unmeet,
So many miles from Arcady.

THEODOSIA GARRISON.

THE ENDING OF THE PLAY

By Henry Sydnor Harrison

AS an illustration of the queer way in which surprising results occasionally spring out of the most trifling of incidents, Gordon, the playwright, sometimes related how it was that the most notable idea of his life, and one which he afterward adapted with distinguished success, came to him directly as the result of a broken car-coupler. But for this little accident, so annoying at the moment, it seems certain that he would never have been thrown into conversation with the remarkable old gentleman from whom he had the story; and as the man died only a few weeks later, in a strait-jacket and with three attendants on his chest, it was not to be expected that the opportunity for an exchange of ideas would ever have offered itself again.

It all happened naturally enough at the time, and Gordon, of course, never realized that he was sliding into anything unusual. Thanks to the fractured coupler, the train lay over just short of two hours in Washington, and, as though disheartened by this setback, lost time all along the line. In Atlanta the following evening it missed its connection by an hour, and was callously sided for a long wait. To make matters as bad as possible, it was raining cats and dogs outside; and the handful of passengers, balancing the choice of evils, flattened their noses disconsolately against the black panes, through which the yard lights twinkled damply, and decided to remain within. In time the three men on board, exhausting other solaces, drifted inevitably to the smoking-room, where one of them, a genial drummer, following the law of

his kind, immediately tapped a bottomless well of anecdote and personal reminiscence.

Gordon, the least difficult of men, listened idly, with perfunctory comment. The drummer was obviously a good-hearted fellow, endowed with a kindly and open nature; but his conversation, considered as an intellectual stimulus, was not noteworthy. Besides, Gordon's attention had almost instantly fixed itself upon the third member of the little party, the strange old man whom later events were to impress indelibly upon his memory. Lying back in the solitary chair, plainly in the densest abstraction, he was, indeed, a man to catch anyone's eye. His deeply cut face gave him the air of looking older, perhaps, than he really was; but at least he was somewhere past sixty—tall, handsome in a heavy sort of way, with a drooping white mustache and restless, wild eyes. His skin had the sallow tint of a morphine eater, and his hands trembled. In his face there was something indefinable, fleeting, nameless, some queer trick of expression that eluded Gordon's analysis, which somehow stamped him as a man apart. His motions were cat-like, lightning-swift. Once he lighted a cigar; and he went through the simple operation in a premeditated, staccato sort of way, almost as though he feared that unless he kept his mind on it, and hurried, he might forget how it was done. For all the consciousness he exhibited of the drummer's vivacious presence, or of Gordon's, he might have had the little compartment all to himself.

Gordon, who was younger and more impressionable then, and always a close

observer of men, watched him narrowly. He had a feeling that no man could look and act in so queer a way without causes based upon strange experience; and it was, he used to explain, with the vague hope of somehow drawing him out that he suffered himself presently to be thrust into the role of chief conversationalist, and to guide the current of talk away from the inconsequential banalities of the commercial tourist.

This was when the drummer, skimming lightly over the range of modern conversational topics, touched in due time upon current drama, and went on to describe at some length the "show" he had just seen in Washington. The play, as it chanced, was one of Gordon's, and when this fact somehow came out in the course of conversation, the drummer's surprise and delight over the happy coincidence knew no bounds. Realizing that he was in the presence of quite a famous man, whose name had long been familiar to him, the drummer's yarn-spinning side was instantly retired from view; and he now sat as a disciple at Gordon's feet, as it were, imbibing wisdom and plying him with admiring questions. Gordon was a good talker, now with a listener at least appreciative; and this, together with the fact that the abstracted old man, with the first mention of the stage, seemed to show evidences of an awakening interest, led him to talk a good deal more freely than was his wont. The drummer was rapt, respectful.

"Mr. Gordon," he said at length, "what do you consider the most remarkable play you ever saw?"

Gordon, after a few preliminaries, told him the story of "Love After Life," that weird drama by the half-demented Polish girl, Nina Hortsky, which had been produced in private four years before, presented twice, and then suddenly withdrawn. Unquestionably, as all those who saw it testified, it was a remarkable play. The action, briefly told, centered about a young poet who turns his back on the rustic maiden whom he loves, in order to be free for an alliance that would net him the

money and ease of living which he thinks to be chiefly necessary to his happiness. In a distant city he marries a woman of wealth and high position, who opportunely dies, leaving him everything. Happiness is not for him, however. Prolonged, if ineffectual, remorse over his treatment of his early love has disordered the young man's mind; and to him it seems that his wife has not really died, but is still with him, in some strange way, half in spirit, half in flesh. He sees her daily across his handsome dining-table, sitting in his study-chair, lying upon his pillow. It was as though she mutely taunted him that, though indeed her money was his, it was at least never to become the plaything of another woman. Finally, mentally unbalanced and tortured beyond endurance, he determines to kill her.

"It is singular," said Gordon, "how convincing it was all made in the play. The staging was wonderful. I think that closing scene really took hold of you more than anything I ever happened to see. The man sits alone in the big library, waiting for her to come down, revolver at full cock in his hand. Night has come on, and there is no light in the room. The idea of the thing—waiting there in the dark for the dead woman—is so gruesome, you see. Suddenly, without sound of any sort, you are aware of a flutter of white in the doorway; and the man springs up, furtively, crouching like an animal. Another minute and you can just make out the figure of a woman, gliding forward, silently, very slowly. There is a blinding flash, a sharp report, and the figure falls prostrate. It's like a shock when you hear a real body of flesh and blood strike the floor. The man stands stock-still, simply dead afraid to move, dead afraid to go and see what he's shot. His man rushes in and turns on the light. I'll never forget the long sigh, like a shudder, which ran through the audience when he did it. They roll the body over till the light from the chandelier beats full upon her face, and—well, it's a hard play to understand, but it was the little country girl

that he had run away from years before. I don't know what it all meant, but it was very absorbing. The curtain went down, and it ended there."

Gordon paused. The drummer, a little lost in the story's rather mystic psychology, stared.

"You don't say!" he ejaculated, somewhat inadequately. For the larger moments of conversation his vocabulary, perhaps, fell short of a full sufficiency.

Gordon, however, did not notice. He had for some time been conscious that he had succeeded in attracting another listener, in whose possible comments he was much more keenly interested. The strange old gentleman in the armchair, he was sure, had not missed a word of his story. From the first moment that the talk had turned to the subject of remarkable plays, his wandering attention had become instantly fixed; and as Gordon's queer story progressed, his interest had gradually deepened into a curious but unmistakable excitement. Now, when it was done, he sat for a moment motionless, his heavy brows drawn into an uncertain frown, then suddenly half rose as though about to leave the room, but unexpectedly changed his mind, and resumed his seat. At Gordon, who was regarding him with almost anxious expectancy, he swiftly darted a look like a dagger.

"Sir," he began abruptly, speaking rapidly in a voice which was low and singularly impressive, "I agree with you in thinking that the story of a remarkable play—a very unusual and remarkable play. But—but—if you like to tell stories of strange plays, let me tell you that there is but one—one which transcends all others, and makes them seem like old wives' tales."

Gordon, his instinct for the unusual now thoroughly aroused, and slightly triumphant to have drawn the man into speech, recognized the necessity of proceeding carefully. "I should gladly have told of a more remarkable play," he said quietly, "but that I know of none."

"How should you!" exclaimed the old gentleman almost petulantly. "I tell you there is but one worth telling—but one. And of the three men who know that, two are dead, and one is—one is—" His voice trailed off into silence, and he stared vacantly at the dripping pane, eyebrows twitching, fingers working. "And one of them," he concluded absently, "is, we might say—myself. No matter how."

It was at this point, Gordon said afterward, that it came over him in a rush that the old gentleman, beyond question, was mentally unbalanced. Uppermost in his mind, however, even after that, was the conviction that his strange fellow-traveler had a few things stored away in his memory which it would be decidedly worth while to hear. Discreetly, Gordon jogged his straying attention.

"I am deeply interested in plays that are out of the beaten rut," he said lightly. "I wish very much that you would consent to tell us—"

"Yes, yes! Certainly! As a playwright yourself, you really ought to know it. There was this man, you see," he began in a hesitating, tentative way oddly at variance with his determined, even fiery aspect, "this man who had a special interest in—in, say, monkeys. We might call him—well—we might call him—Protheroe, just for a name, you know—"

"Protheroe!" Gordon sat up, showing his surprise despite himself. "Not Dr. Protheroe, the chimpanzee man!"

A strange look, part vexation, part cunning, shot across the other's face. "I didn't say his name was really—that. I said we might simply *call* him that, in order to give him some name, you know. There's a little difference there, my friend. Ah, well! it's all a long time ago. I'm afraid I can't recall it now—after all—"

Gordon, naturally not doubting that it was the real Dr. Protheroe the man had in mind, let his thoughts run swiftly back into the past. About this mysterious man he knew no more

than what the newspapers had told him at the time—which was, when boiled down to meager substance, merely that Protheroe was the owner of a remarkable chimpanzee, said to be marvelously gifted, but, like all the tribe in captivity, sullen and ferocious in the extreme. That this dangerous brute had on one occasion, years before, killed a chance caller to whom he was being exhibited, Gordon recollected quite distinctly. He remembered the clear narrative which the doctor, the sole witness of the unhappy event, had told at the inquest, and the instant and obvious verdict of the coroner's jury. The papers had featured it as a sort of modern murder of the rue Morgue. Almost immediately afterward, he believed, the animal had died or been killed; and Protheroe, who had lived alone in a remote part of the city, with no friends and no servants, had suddenly dropped from public view.

The air of mystery enveloping this strange man had piqued Gordon's curiosity at the time; and the prospect, now so oddly offered him, of learning at last the significance of it, attracted him immensely. His eye rested upon the old man in whom this hope seemed centered in a gaze so earnest as to be, in effect, a plea.

"Of course I've heard the name of Protheroe," he said slowly, "of one Protheroe, that is. Everybody has. But I know practically nothing. I never heard that there was a playwright of that name——"

"Nor did I," snapped the old man. "He was in a way the subject, not the writer, of this play as I recall it all. It's a long story, as I think I mentioned, and I've forgotten most of it. . . . How it rains! I've a good notion to go and lie down and take a little nap."

"But—" began the drummer.

Gordon motioned him sharply to be silent. "We'll be starting before very long," he said quietly. "It'll be impossible to sleep. And we ought really to bear each other company on this dreary evening. And by the

bye," he added pleasantly, struck with a sudden thought, "why not have a drink all round?"

The old man made no objection. He took Gordon's flask with alacrity, and with hands slightly shaking poured out a stiff drink in a glass borrowed from the water-cooler. Also, with a swift gesture, he dipped something round and white furtively from his waistcoat pocket. Afterward Gordon, recalling the almost instant quieting in his manner, made a no doubt accurate guess as to what that little pellet was.

"You see," the man began again rapidly, "Protheroe had the luck, good or bad, as you will, to become friends with a young writer of plays—with one Barney. No, you are not familiar with the name, because it is one that just came into my head. His real name was something different, perhaps. Barney thought he could get a play out of Protheroe—but he didn't. No, no. He's dead now, poor old Barney. The story is really a warning to playwrights—a warning to mind their own business. Because, as you will see, it was all Barney's meddlesomeness that did it. You know, my friend, that plays end in strange ways sometimes; but I think that Barney's play with Protheroe had the strangest ending that ever a play had."

And so saying, he proceeded without more ado to recount, with no little vividness and narrative skill, the story of Barney's remarkable play.

Gordon, curled back in a corner of the lounge, his eyes never leaving the speaker's face, did not feel that he had any reason to complain that his expectations had been unduly raised. Indeed, as the story progressed, he became aware that the hearing of so astonishing a story in so unexpected a way was the queerest thing that his life had so far given him. What fixed this conclusion irrevocably in his mind was the strange conviction which suddenly came to him with all the force of absolute certainty, that the wild-eyed teller of it could be no other than Protheroe himself—Protheroe

the mysterious, who had gone crazy over the death of a monkey, had come back, and was now so obviously going there again.

This surmise, to be brief, Gordon afterward succeeded in verifying, beyond reasonable doubt, at the sanatorium where the doctor, a month or two later, died. He also gathered a few additional details which had a certain illuminating value as regards a better understanding of the main narrative. The story which follows, however, is substantially as Gordon had it from Protheroe's own lips in the Atlanta station-yard that night; and it is set down here almost word for word as Gordon, in the small hours after that first night when a breathless audience had made plain how they regarded his adaptation of the idea, told it in his rooms to Harlowe Brown and me.

To Barney's lot fell a vigorous life, full of action, overrunning with color and adventure. At fifteen, his native town choked him with its narrowness, and without confiding his intention to his people he booked one morning for Valparaiso as cabin-boy on the *Cotopaxi*. For half a score of years he zig-zagged carelessly about the globe as the humor struck him, earning his bread with his hands on many seas, from the North Cape to Sydney, from Singapore to Boston, and picking up in the course of it, by the time he was five-and-twenty, a closer acquaintance with the world than most men die with. In time the home-fever caught him hard, which was a curious thing for a man who had no home; and he settled down as a writer of plays in the city which, from his boyhood, he had meant to make his home. His first play was an Indian melodrama, based on dual personality, which the public took kindly to and a great critic pronounced "the most wonderful bit of purely imaginative work done in recent years." Barney, having seen strange things in his time, knew, of course that there was little imagination in it; but he merely smiled and bided his time.

Barney was casting about for a new theme that should be queerer than his first, when he happened, by a stroke of fortune, to meet Dr. Protheroe. Protheroe was commonly dubbed an enigma. He came of a nervous, eccentric stock, with insanity tainting four generations back—four, anyway. His father's brother had died in a madhouse. So had his great-grandfather. But the doctor himself was called of sound mind, save on the subject of evolution, upon which, as the few men who had ever known him agreed, he was quite daft. It was sometimes said that he was engaged in certain experiments of great importance, as had been reported of his father and grandfather before him; but what these were, and for what, there was no man to say. Some whispered that he was working out a proof of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, but they were not very clear as to how this was to be done. Barney, scenting material in the eccentric doctor, set himself openly to the task of extracting it. Protheroe was strongly attracted by him from the first, but he did not talk readily about himself. Hints, ever gaining in strength and point, failed to elicit more than answering hints. Weeks passed, and Protheroe seemed as unmoved as Gibraltar Rock in an April shower.

In the end, however, Barney prevailed. Living alone a great deal, and much staying out of bed to dream the queerest of dreams, tend to unsettle the mind; and further, in certain temperaments, they lead very irresistibly to drink. It may be, too, that there were moments when Protheroe longed for someone to whom he could talk. Be that as it may, there came a night when, as he and Barney were hotly discussing certain aspects of the theory called Darwin's, he opened wide and his secret fell from him. "I suppose I shall be sorry in the morning, but to-night," he cried, pushing his chair from him, "tonight I feel that I must tell you."

So Barney, his faculties tensely alert, learned that Protheroe's work was noth-

ing less than a practical demonstration of the truth of evolution, by taking a monkey and making him into a man. The experiment was based on the old and somewhat bumptious theory that if nature unaided can accomplish this or that result in a given number of years, man, by noting the causes of it and skilfully concentrating them a thousandfold, can accomplish the same result in an indefinitely shorter period. His grandfather had seen the special application of this theory, and the tremendous possibilities of the idea had so fascinated him that he gave up his life to it. After a long period of continued disappointment, he had succeeded in getting hold of two chimpanzees which even the cold climate of the North could not force into consumption. Then he had really begun. At his death, he had handed down an unfinished experiment as the most priceless treasure that ever man bequeathed.

"You see the idea," said Dr. Protheroe, pacing restlessly up and down. "It is a forcing process. Man took many ages to come down from the ape, for the reason that he lacked guidance. It is well understood that in many respects the old-world chimpanzee is the intellectual superior of the lowest African or Australian savage. It is only that his parts are not developed. Briefly speaking, I am developing them, as nature did; but I am doing it infinitely more forcibly, more directly. And the result, if they live, is a foregone conclusion." He stopped beside the table and took a long pull from a tumbler half full of raw whisky. "They are now in the ninth generation," he said thickly, "and every animal has but five thousand years between himself and his father."

Barney, profoundly impressed, rose and faced him. Protheroe's absolute conviction gripped him like a vise and forced home the wild plausibility of the idea. Besides the mere wonder of it, he had a nearer and more personal interest.

"They must be pretty far along the road now—these monkeys," he urged.

Protheroe spoke slowly, almost with reluctance. "There are only three now. This damned air has killed the others. Two, both females, are at my country place on Long Island. Through lack of expert attention they have suffered a partial reversion, and I do not expect a great deal from them. But the other!" he cried in a shaking voice. "Ah, God! the other!"

"Where is he?" asked Barney.

"Here," said Protheroe, and turned away.

Barney started. He saw, however, that the doctor was very much excited and needed cautious handling. "Show him to me," he said quietly.

Protheroe did not notice him. His mind was full of the last of his monkeys. "I have been with him night and day since he was born. I have tended him as no mother ever tended her first-born. I love him as no woman was ever loved. If he should die——"

"Show him to me," said Barney more insistently.

"Think what it means!" cried Protheroe, gesturing violently with the empty bottle. "If monkeys are really men, then men are nothing but monkeys; and that will knock the bottom from under the world. It will smash the universe. The *accidence* of man! Oh, it will explode the dream of heaven, it will burst through the fear of hell. There will be no virtue and no crime, and I, who showed it all—I will be the greatest man in all the thousand worlds!"

Barney laid his hand sternly upon the doctor's shaking shoulder. "Show him to me," he commanded once more.

"No," said Dr. Protheroe.

The two men looked into each other's hot faces. Protheroe swore a great oath and flung the bottle crashingly into the fireplace. Barney, reading consent in his eyes, hooked his arm compellingly into the doctor's.

"Well, well, Barney," said Protheroe, "I am willing to trust you. But listen. If you ever reveal to a living soul what has passed between us this night, it will go hard with you. Do

not misunderstand me. I will kill you."

Barney nodded. Protheroe, with no further speech, led the way to a small extension room, three steps down from the bathroom, shut off from the passage by a wooden door and a nickel-rodded gate, both locked. The doctor flung open the outer door, and Barney, peering eagerly, could make out in the semi-darkness before him the figure of a smallish man in a light sack suit, who promptly laid aside the pipe he was smoking and rose to greet them. There was just light enough to see that he was, apparently, a negro. As for the ape, there was no sign of him. Barney turned sharply about, and found that Protheroe was watching him narrowly.

"Well?" said Barney impatiently.

"Well?" said Dr. Protheroe.

"Your keeper, I suppose. But where the deuce is the chimpanzee?"

Protheroe laughed aloud. "That is the chimpanzee," he said, sliding back the nickel gate. "Let me introduce you. . . . How are you, Gecko? I have brought you a visitor this evening. This is Mr. Edward Barney, the playwright."

The thing called Gecko made a sound in his throat that was not unlike "Good evening," and put out his long arm a little uncertainly. Barney took his hand, and felt that it was gloved.

The two figures regarded each other very intently. It was an epoch-making event in the life of each. What held Barney's attention first were the eyes, which were remarkably acute and intelligent, with just a hint, perhaps, of something else in them. The face was extraordinarily human. The hair had been shaved, away so that the skin was quite bare. The nose was insignificant; but the forehead and chin had been decidedly improved, the one being brought forward and the other back, so that the line of the profile was not at all bad. Barney decided that he had seen many a man who had more of the beast in his expression.

Protheroe, with the air of a fond father, put Gecko through some of his

accomplishments, and Barney watched, marveling. An hour sped quickly away.

"There!" said the doctor at last. "Gecko, my boy, it's time for you to go to bed."

The chimpanzee turned away at once and began to undress. After taking off his shirt he retired to the closet, whence he emerged after a minute in a suit of white pajamas. Protheroe caught Barney's eye and smiled joyfully.

"There you have it, Barney! How did Gecko know that it wasn't proper to undress before a stranger? You are the first he has ever seen." He went over to tuck the creature into bed, and, leaning over him, whispered a few words into his ear. The ape laughed outright. Barney stared at the weird scene in dazed absorption. The wonder of the thing took him by the throat, as it had Protheroe's grandfather before him.

"I have not heard Gecko laugh like that for many a day," the doctor said, when they were once more back in the study. "The great difficulty with the chimpanzee is that as he gets older he usually becomes more sullen and ferocious and less and less easy to control. The old fellows are often very dangerous."

"I know," said Barney abstractedly. "I have seen a pet orang at the Cape turn upon the sailor who owned him and fell him like a log."

"You!" exclaimed Protheroe. "What do you know of oranges?"

"I have been a sailor," said Barney quietly, "and know of many things. Look at my badge of service." He pushed back his sleeve and revealed a blue flag roughly tattooed upon the brown wrist. Then, thinking it better to have the matter frankly out between them, he looked up suddenly and met Protheroe's eye. "I want to write a play about your Gecko," he said; "writing it, of course, as a piece of pure romance."

To Barney's surprise, Protheroe received this suggestion coolly. "I don't mind your trying," he said readily

enough. "By the time you can write a play about him that anybody can act, Gecko's descendants will be ready to go to the first night. He has the mind of a man now, Barney, the mind of a man! He gets pleasure out of pictures, out of books. He likes music. He shaves himself. His manners are perfect. Some day he will talk, and then will be told the most wonderful story that ever mortal ears heard. Do you know, Barney, I have always thought that it would come suddenly. Some day something in my Gecko's head will burst, and he will be a man."

And so he babbled on like a running stream. It was long before Barney, who was not very cool himself, succeeded in persuading him to undress and go to bed.

The next day Barney began his play. At first he made no progress at all. He sketched out a new plot at each sitting, only to tear his manuscript up in disgust at the next. Then one morning, as he was forcing himself, less hopeful than ever, to bring his mind to bear upon his scattered thoughts, the idea suddenly came to him; and he saw plainly that such a story could work out in but one way. He wrote the first scene before he left his desk, and stopped then only because he felt the necessity of stimulating his thought by a visit to Protheroe's Gecko.

If Protheroe, in soberer moments, had had any twinge of regret at having given Barney leave to write his play, he very easily thrust it aside; for he was reasonably sure that it was a mad idea, and that no play could ever be written from such a theme that would stand a remote chance of being put on the stage. But as the days went by he noticed with a strange sense of foreboding the growing intimacy between Barney and the chimpanzee, which he himself had authorized and made possible. Two or three hours out of every twenty-four Barney spent in the little extension beyond the bathroom. It smote his heart to see the vigorous, intelligent creature that was so near

a man sit there helpless, or pace restlessly up and down his narrow floor, day after day, waiting only for time to pass. It seemed such a useless sort of existence for the finest brute in creation. Barney pondered much and wrote and rewrote much. Gecko was his constant inspiration. Weeks passed and the play grew steadily.

"Protheroe," said Barney, one evening, "it's my belief that poor fellow hates you."

The doctor's face flushed angrily. This was an idea that had come to him unbidden many times of late.

"See here," he said bluntly; "don't make me sorry I ever showed him to you."

"But he does," repeated Barney coolly. "I have watched him so long that I can tell what he thinks about, and I know. I am so sure of this feeling that I am going to base the dénouement of my play upon it. Professor Schwanthaler, who has bred up a chimpanzee more wonderful even than Gecko, discovers that his creature loathes him, and, in a passion, kills him."

Dr. Protheroe snorted with contempt. "Jackass!" he sneered. "To make a man destroy with his own hand what he has given up his life to produce. As if personal feelings had anything to do with it!"

But Barney, who knew that the doctor was necessary to him just now, would not be dragged into a quarrel. "That is just what Hogan says," he observed, choking back his anger; "but all the same he thinks he will want the play. Did I tell you? He has read two acts and says it is so crazy that if it misses getting hissed off the stage, it will be the greatest play in years."

Protheroe sat dumfounded. The idea that anybody would take Barney's play seriously had scarcely entered his mind. He saw clearly that the effect of the play would be the virtual betrayal of his secret to the world; and he felt that he had somehow been tricked.

"But it won't miss it!" he shouted excitedly. "When your actor comes out rigged up as a monkey the audi-

ence will rise up and hoot him into the wings. It's too contemptibly farcical, Barney, too damned preposterous——"

"The strange thing about it," said Barney, quite unmoved, "is that the audience will never be able to make up their minds until the very end whether they have been looking at man or beast. That is one of the elements of strength in the play, I think. . . . However, you will be able to judge for yourself when it's put on." And this was all that he could be got to say, though the doctor showered him with sarcasm until he was tired.

Protheroe's pride, or his obstinacy, was too invincible to allow him, after giving Barney permission to go ahead with his play, to beg him now to withdraw it; and he had, besides, the idea that it would be no use to do so. But from that night he sought by every means that his ingenuity could suggest to badger him into abandoning the idea as visionary and absurd. The matter of make-up, for one thing, he was always insisting, presented insuperable difficulties.

But Barney could not be budged. On the contrary, his confidence waxed stronger with each passing day. The play, at last being almost done, he could afford to speak plainly, and he cursed the doctor for a wrong-headed fool. So the quarrel grew very bitter between them.

One day, a little later, something happened which seemed, at the moment, destined to clear away all difficulties. Protheroe had noticed for some time that the chimpanzee was steadily growing more moody and sullen, and less and less amenable to persuasion or command. It took all his powers of reason and self-restraint to force the ape through the daily exercises in which he had once shown such interest and desire to improve. One afternoon the doctor questioned him about this, for the hundredth time, and received the greatest surprise of his life.

Protheroe had been drinking hard more or less all day, but he always insisted that his head was perfectly clear,

and that there was no possibility of his having been mistaken. He went into Gecko's room about dusk to talk with him for awhile before dinner, and found the ape with his head bowed upon his arms, shaken with sobs.

"Why, Gecko," he said, in pained surprise, "what's the matter?"

"I wish I was dead," said Gecko quite distinctly.

Protheroe had been so long looking forward to the day when his chimpanzee would speak to him that he was not conscious of any great surprise; but he realized that his own conduct was a matter of most critical importance.

"Why do you feel that way about it, my boy?" he asked very gently. In spite of his strong effort to be quite calm there was a slight hitch in his voice. The chimpanzee looked at him with curious, startled eyes. "Why do you wish you were dead, Gecko?" asked the doctor once more.

This question, in various forms, Protheroe repeated for something more than half an hour, wheedling and coaxing and commanding until his patience was worn to shreds. But all to no purpose; Gecko's silence remained impenetrable, beyond his reach. At length the doctor, bursting with rage and disappointment, lost all control of himself, and leaning swiftly forward, with the back of his open hand struck the ape sharply between the eyes. Gecko sprang fiercely up with a quick exclamation of anger, and Protheroe for the moment expected to be struck down, as the sailor at the Cape had been struck down. But Gecko, though with blazing eyes, only brushed by him, and started an endless pacing of his little room.

Protheroe recalled poignantly that it was the first time in all Gecko's life that he had ever been struck. "It is all Barney," he said as he flung remorsefully out of the room. "Barney—I must find a way to stop him, somehow."

But Barney did not come in, and he passed a miserable evening.

Barney finished his play some time

in the early gray of a March morning, and that evening, as they had long ago planned, the two men dined together in a private room at the Players' Club. Barney had promised that he would then tell in detail the story of his play. Gecko's few spoken words had done much to relieve the tension between the two men; and that evening, after a good deal of wine, their spirits ran high.

"Ah, Protheroe," said Barney, when they were left alone with their cigars, "I may be the greatest playwright of my time, but surely you can spare me that; for you, if all goes well, should be the greatest man of every time."

Dr. Protheroe, while he might, entered into the spirit of the happy occasion. "Barney," he said cordially, "you are a good fellow, and at heart, as I hope you know, I'm fonder of you than any man living, except my own Gecko. I tell you this now, because in a minute or so I suppose I shall fall foul of you, and then it will be too late. But I want you to know it, and whatever I say or do, always to remember it. And now let's have the play."

Barney, tilting his chair back against the wall, told his play at considerable length; and as he told it, the intense personal interest which it had for both of them gradually possessed their minds, quite to the exclusion of the kindly sentiments they had just reciprocated. The action of the plot extended over three years, but was very simple. It was built about an elderly professor who, after many years of experimenting, had produced an ape that was in all respects, save speech only, the equal of man. In order to preserve his line, the professor marries his pretty, silly, inordinately vain young ward. Her more or less complicated relations with two other men furnish the sub-plot. The ape gradually evinces a great fondness for the professor's wife, which she realizes and curiously fosters. The professor observes this, but offers no objections, thinking that the attachment would have an educational value for the ape. In the end, however, jealousy of his

wife's greater influence with the creature prompts him to send her away on a long visit to her mother's. Then suddenly the professor discovers that the ape hates him. In a fit of passion, his mind temporarily unbalanced by anger and wounded self-love, he shoots the ape dead, and, overcome by remorse, puts an end to his own life.

When Barney had at last come to an end Dr. Protheroe set down his glass hard, and put one question on a point that deeply interested him.

"And how," he asked shortly, "does your professor discover that his ape hates him?"

"Ah!" cried Barney in a ringing voice, "that is the great secret of my play. I cannot tell even you that just now."

At this all Protheroe's jealousy of Barney, and his old dread and hatred of the play surged in upon him and swept him off his feet. He sneered, and poured some wine. "I see," he said bitterly. "You think I will laugh at you. And so I would, I have no doubt. But I do not need that. Your whole play is one big laugh from first to last. And that fool's ending! Ha! ha! It wouldn't convince an audience of donkeys."

Long experience had taught Barney that it was idle to argue this point with Protheroe; but the play was done now, and he could at least hit back. "If you had the intelligence of a peanut," he said, his blood rising, "you would see that no other ending is conceivable. But it isn't necessary that you should see. Save your criticism for what you know something about, will you? I'm about weary of it."

"Be still!" thundered Protheroe, losing all control of himself. "It doesn't make any difference about your asinine ending, anyway. Nobody will ever hear it. The real ending will come in the first act when your hired actor comes out made up as a monkey——"

Barney raised his voice till it simply obliterated the doctor's. "Listen!" he shouted. "You talk nothing but rot—old woman's drivel. How

do you presume to know what an audience will feel? I tell you, I have designed a costume and make-up so perfect that nobody will know whether it is man or——"

"It wouldn't fool an audience of donkeys," broke in Protheroe caustically. "You had better get a professional strong man to play the part. Audiences are so apt to be unfeeling, you know. A man of weak nerve might not survive the evening."

Barney, his face flushed, leaned suddenly across the table. "There is only one man in the wide world who could play that part," he said, with tense slowness, "and I am that man. And as I shall play it, it will be the greatest part that the stage has ever seen."

Protheroe sat astounded. "You!" he cried at last, with burning scorn. "You! Who are you, pray, to talk of acting great parts?" He caught a glimpse of Barney's tattooed flag, where his cuff had been pushed back from the wrist. "Ha! ha! A cabin-boy! A deck-hand with aspirations for the stage!"

"You dare—! You'll smart for that!" cried Barney hoarsely, pushed beyond all endurance. He sprang up so quickly that Protheroe rose too, expecting a blow. "Not that—not that! But there are ways—I am going home."

"Run along," said Dr. Protheroe. "I wish to God you would. Run along home and try on your monkey-clothes."

Barney faced him with a white face. "I will make you understand," he said steadily, "that you are ignorant as hell." And then, in a minute, he was gone.

The doctor sat for a long time alone. A revulsion of feeling followed on his unnatural excitement, and he was all at once curiously depressed and despondent. In one breath, he hated Barney and loved him like a son. He told himself, in any case, that he would see him in the morning and make it all up, but this did not appear to bring him much consolation. "I have made them both hate me," he

groaned at last, rising and stretching his cramped limbs. "Both Barney and Gecko hate me." So he thought of Gecko, the Gecko who had spoken to him and would not speak again, and his anger dully rose. "I will make Gecko speak," he dimly resolved, "to-night." And he called for his hat and coat and picked his way carefully home.

When he had reached his own doorstep, however, he realized the absurdity of a visit to the chimpanzee at so late an hour; and he stumbled reluctantly up to his bedroom and began to undress. He could not free his mind, however, of moody thoughts of Gecko, and of the strange obstinacy, as it appeared, which alone now stood between him and the consummation of his highest hopes. By the time that he had got ready for bed the desire to see his creature had grown so strong within him that, almost involuntarily, he slipped back into his coat and trousers, and started for the door. "I will just take one peep at him," he whispered as he shuffled down the hall, "and Gecko will never know."

The door at the end of the passageway had been left unlocked, and Protheroe, with a curse upon Barney's wretched carelessness, softly pulled it open. There was no need for any special quietness, however, for the chimpanzee was standing, fully dressed, in the middle of the room, his arms folded upon his breast and his unfaltering gaze turned fully upon Protheroe. A dying fire burned in the grate, but apart from this the room was not lighted. Even in the half-darkness, however, Protheroe saw at a glance that the chimpanzee appeared to have undergone some subtle, indefinable change. There was an erectness in his bearing, a look in his eye, a something in his whole bearing, which seemed to be the outward evidences for some strange inward transformation. Protheroe, wondering and slightly startled, slid back the nickel gate and went in.

"Why, Gecko," he said, in aston-

ishment, "what's the matter? Why aren't you in bed?"

And the chimpanzee said, quite distinctly: "I am not in bed because I have had enough of being fooled with. I am never going to bed any more. I am never going to be a man." His voice was hoarse and guttural, and he articulated badly, but it was easy, too easy, to understand him.

Dr. Protheroe leaned heavily against the mantel and tried to steady his reeling brain.

"Gecko," he said, speaking as naturally as he could, "this is not worthy of you. You are not feeling yourself tonight. For more than fifty years I and my fathers have struggled for only this thing—that we might achieve manhood for you and your line—that we might make you men. Would you undo the work of half a century? Have I ever shown you anything but kindness and consideration?"

"Would you think it kind if I and my fathers had trapped you into the jungle and kept you there forever, trying to make you into a creature like ourselves? How do you know that I want to be a man? Do you suppose there have never been times when something in me cried out for the open heavens and the flowing water and the cocoanut palms and all those things that I should have had? I am done with your kindness. I have learned enough to know what it means to be a man, and I shall never be one. I am going away."

In the chimpanzee's tones there was so much coldness, so much unshakable resolution that Protheroe, cut to the quick, felt his self-control slipping swiftly from him. "And how," he asked, enunciating with difficulty, "do you expect to get away?"

"I shall find out the combination of the gate," said Gecko at once; "or I will overpower you some day as you are coming in. It is all one."

Protheroe was silent for a moment. "You miss the real point of the situation," he said at last slowly. "Whether you go or stay, you have become a man now, and there's an end to it.

Thank God that when the day has come for you to be working along fool's lines of your own, it is too late for them to be of any use."

"Sir," said the chimpanzee coldly, "let me tell you that the real reason of your success with us is that we have long known what you were trying to do, and have always helped you. My great-grandfather discovered the secret; my mother told it to me when I was born. How much this help amounted to, you will be able to decide for yourself; for it is now about to be withdrawn. Whether I go or stay, it is all one. If I stay you will have the chance to witness with your own eyes my gradual going back to the type of my family."

Dr. Protheroe's hand groped along the wall behind him and closed on a heavy, oddly carved Indian dagger—Barney's present—which had served him as both ornament and paper-knife. "You would thwart me?" he asked hoarsely.

"That is it," the chimpanzee answered. "Exactly. I felt that I could best work out my feeling for you by telling you clearly what I was going to do; because I want you always to know that my going back has been done purposely, and of my own free will."

Dr. Protheroe advanced three steps carefully, and stood before the chimpanzee. "And what is your feeling for me?" he demanded thickly.

"Just what you would imagine an animal would feel toward his captor; what a man would feel toward another who abused him, and was cruel to him. I hate you!"

Then there seemed to rush into Protheroe's head, as by the bursting of a dam, a flood-tide of all the passion he had ever felt or could ever feel in the world. Something roared in his ears, like the rushing of waters. Tiny flames, bright and smarting, flashed before his eyes, and these dazzled him and made his aim uncertain. But he knew that he must not wait, must not delay an instant. His right arm swung swiftly out and up and fell hard and

true. He reached the heart as accurately as he had ever done, in days gone by, on the operating-table. Protheroe got a flash of startled horror from eyes that smote him like a blow. The creature fell limply, carrying the knife with him. There was a terrible groan, like a man's, a slight convulsion through the sprawling limbs, and then—nothing.

Protheroe, suddenly ghastly sick, stared for a moment at the loved one he had murdered; and the ending of Barney's play, which he had so often derided, in a flash came back to him. He turned to the mantel and rested his head upon his arms.

"Barney was right, Barney was right," he murmured over and over, till the words lost all trace of meaning and took on a new fantastic sound.

Protheroe stood motionless, beyond thought; and downstairs the clock rang out the passing hours. Toward morning the embers in the grate fell away into ashes, and he shivered with the cold. This recalled something to his mind, and he went over to the bureau and unlocked the top drawer.

He did not remember having made up his mind to commit suicide. It was so obviously the only way out of a life that had now lost all significance that the decision seemed merely to grow up of itself. In the semi-darkness, Protheroe held the little pistol close before his eyes, tested the trigger and saw that it was loaded all round.

It was then that he first became conscious that there was a good deal of

noise coming from the direction of the closet, and it came vaguely to his mind that he had been hearing it for some time. However, there was no time to investigate it just then. Later, perhaps—another time. Protheroe raised the revolver slowly and put the muzzle between his teeth. He did not wish powder stains on his face when they found him next morning. And then the noise in the closet became so intolerable and so persistent that, apathetically, he went over and unbolted the door.

Gecko stepped swiftly out, clad in his white pajamas. The centre-table was in front of him and shut off, in part, his view of the room; but at Protheroe, through the first glimmering light of dawn, he looked wonderingly, as though for explanation.

Protheroe gazed from one to the other, from the quick to the dead, not even trying to understand. He was mad, of course; he knew now that he was perfectly mad; but what about the Thing at his foot—the Thing lying upon the floor?

Gecko touched a button on the wall, and switched on some light, plenty of light.

It fell full upon the shapeless mass by the table-leg, and lit up the smooth bronzed skin where the sleeve had been violently thrust from the wrist. It flared brightly on the wrist and on the blue flag roughly tattooed upon the forearm.

Protheroe lurched forward upon Barney's dead body.



FAR FROM IT

SHE—Was it one of those loveless marriages?

HE—Oh, no! She loved him, and he loved her money.



THE victim of circumstances is generally a willing one.

OFFICER O'LEARY AT THE CROSSING

'TIS all along Fifth avenue, as wheels the grand display
 Of hansom, coach, victoria, of landau and coupé,
 That like Napoleon Bonaparte reviewing his array,
 Stands Officer O'Leary at the crossing.

"Whoa, there! slow there! Can't ye understand?
 Dhraw back! shtop that hack whin Oi howld up me hand.
That's the way ye must obey whin th' ginerall gives command,"
 Says Officer O'Leary at the crossing.

'Tis all along Fifth avenue the city orchid blooms,
 The miles and miles of many styles, furs and silks and plumes;
 But keen and stern, the censor of the coachmen and the grooms,
 Stands Officer O'Leary at the crossing.

"Whoa, now! slow now! Put yer horse to grass!
 Aisy, sure, ye fresh chafoor—don't give me anny sass!
 Halt, Oi say, an' open way to let this lady pass!"
 Says Officer O'Leary at the crossing.

Half a mile of millionaires along that moving chain,
 Dappled grays and thoroughbreds with cropped and arching mane—
 But Maggie Flynn, the milliner, need not appeal in vain
 To break the grand procession at the crossing.

"Whoa, there! slow there! Don't give me anny chin!
 Stiddy, sure, ye fresh chafoor, before I run yez in!
 Whin Oi've me say ye'll all give way fer little Maggie Flynn,"
 Says Officer O'Leary at the crossing.

WALLACE IRWIN.



A GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT

EDITH—Poor Pauline! She was lost at sea.
 LENA—Oh, isn't that dreadful! And she so much wanted to be cremated.



THE IDEAL GIRL

"IS she one of those horrible girls who know enough to set men right?"
 "No; she's one of those delightful girls who know enough not to."

THE ART OF GIVING GRAND OPERA

By Heinrich Conried

IDEAL opera in New York is impossible under existing conditions. By general acclaim the opera given at the Metropolitan Opera House is, in the matter of the singers, superior to that of any opera house in the world. The greatest singers that are available I gather here to satisfy the discriminating public. Salaries that are reasonable and unreasonable are paid to these artists, the highest amounts paid to any singers the world over; for when an artist leaves his native haunts to come to America his scale of prices is immediately multiplied by two, three or four. A singer who appears quite willingly at an opera house, say, of Munich or Berlin, for thirty thousand marks a season demands of me a hundred thousand marks for three months' work—and expects to be coaxed to come. In addition to this effort I must turn politician or even diplomat to secure a leave of absence for this singer from his royal patron.

But all this is a part of the great game of grand opera—a game at which numberless impresarios have sacrificed health and fortune. The difficulties of putting through a season of opera are enormous. They tax the ingenuity, patience and skill of the most experienced manager; and beside them the troubles of my fellow theatrical managers are puny. But if the director of the Metropolitan opera enterprise is afflicted with artistic ideals then he is wellnigh engulfed by the difficulties that beset him.

When I assumed this position two seasons ago it was with the firm deter-

mination to give opera as New York never before had seen it. I had raised the standard of the Irving Place Theatre to a plane of artistic excellence that has been heralded abroad, and I fondly believed that the same would be possible at the Metropolitan Opera House. When I examined the condition of this latter house critically I could scarcely believe my senses. A primitive system of stage-lighting, a stage that was technically almost useless because it was insufficiently equipped with traps and other mechanical devices, the entire cavity under the stage stuffed with old scenery—these were a few of the conditions that greeted me on my first route to idealism. But what startled me more than anything else was to find an opera house, so modern and magnificent as this one, devoid of any single room designed for rehearsing!

The installation of a modern system of electric lighting, the rebuilding of the stage, the enlarging of the space of the orchestra—these improvements were immediately undertaken, and the ensuing changes somewhat helped matters. The fact that the renovated opera house was turned over to me only three days before my first season in it began, is something that passes the credulity of the foreign impresarios. Yet, that is what happened, and my first season at the Metropolitan was a managerial nightmare and is, fortunately, a thing of the past.

I then instituted a lot of necessary reforms, and began the second season, which concluded quite differently from the previous one. It was this second

season, just concluded, the most successful one the Metropolitan Opera House ever has had, financially; and artistically I was happily able to show a great improvement over former productions in this theatre. But it is still a long way off from the opera that I dream about giving, and which I can give if conditions can be changed.

In the first place the stage of this opera house is absolutely inadequate. There is no place here to store scenery, which essential commodity is kept in three great warehouses in the neighborhood. This involves a tremendous amount of handling and hauling which is ruinous to scenery, is vastly expensive and makes a scenically successful performance a matter of sheer chance. For instance, at a matinee last winter "Parsifal" was produced. The performance concluded at five o'clock, at which time a horde of men was turned loose to take the vast amount of "Parsifal" scenery, the great panoramas and the innumerable drops, out of the opera house to place them temporarily on the sidewalk, to bring in the equally elaborate scenery of "La Gioconda," and prepare that for action for the performance which began at eight o'clock that evening. This production of "La Gioconda" concluded at midnight, at which hour another shift of hands dragged the "La Gioconda" scenery out of the building, loaded it on trucks and distributed it to the warehouses. Then commenced the bringing in of the scenery of "Götterdämmerung," which was finally in the house by ten o'clock the following morning. I called a scenic rehearsal of "Götterdämmerung" at ten that morning, and rehearsed until one. At half-past one the performance of "Götterdämmerung" began!

Now, the men who adjusted the sixty-four drop-pieces of this last set of scenery are not the same ones who handled it during the performance; and as the stage hands have but a short time in which to acquaint themselves with the hanging of the new scenery it is only reasonable to excuse

some slight slip in the various transformations which have to be made according to a schedule that is dictated to a second by the music. So the fact remains that if a performance of any work at the Metropolitan Opera House turns out scenically well it is a matter of sheer luck or accident—possibly both.

The best stage-manager in the world can help me but little so long as there are not opportunities for rehearsing the scenery thoroughly just before the performance; and there can be no talk of time for rehearsals so long as I am compelled to give as many performances each week as are now demanded. A performance on each of the first five days of the week, two on Saturday and a concert on Sunday night sum up a weekly list that is not equaled by the busiest great opera houses of Europe; and to continue this for a season of fifteen or seventeen weeks is a strain that is not appreciated by the multitude which sits on the other side of the curtain and admires or criticizes.

In my first season I anxiously tried to impress the seal of great musical authority on the Wagner operas performed at the Metropolitan Opera House by bringing over Felix Mottl, the celebrated Bayreuth and Munich conductor. Mottl realized in the first week that the conditions surrounding the production of grand opera at the Metropolitan Opera House were insurmountable barriers, and frankly said so. He concluded that the only way possible was to submit to these conditions, which he did, with results that were not artistically gratifying to either of us. Instead of dictating the details, Mottl found here that the various intricate circumstances about him dictated to him; and he had either to submit or not conduct at all. So he chose the former although I doubt that he is anxious ever to return here again so long as these conditions prevail and dominate.

Now, if I attempt to bring over some other of the famous conductors—and there are very few available—they will stipulate conditions that I cannot possi-

bly promise to fulfil. For instance, von Schuch, the celebrated conductor of the Dresden Royal Opera, demands that he have, say, three rehearsals for a Sunday night concert. That is absolutely impossible here, for I cannot spare my stage for so long a time, and there is no other room for rehearsal in this building. Suppose he were to ask for even three rehearsals of a work that he is conducting for the first time here—"Lohengrin" or "Tannhäuser"—I could not persuade the principal singers to attend these rehearsals. Were I to approach Madame Eames or Madame Nordica with a request to attend three rehearsals of "Lohengrin" either of them would laugh me to scorn, for one of these rehearsals must surely conflict with the singer's public appearance. So von Schuch's experience would probably be a duplicate of Mottl's last season. He would doubtless fulfil his contract, doing the best possible under the circumstances, and then depart with the consoling final remark that the conditions in New York are such that to give ideal grand opera is out of the question.

The audiences here are hopelessly accustomed to star casts, and this demand makes it almost impossible to give perfect ensemble opera. I cannot persuade the great singers to arrive here sufficiently in advance of the beginning of the season to go through the ordeal of rehearsals that are so necessary to perfect opera. They are the world's greatest singers, and their singing services are of such value that they must reduce the time of rehearsing to a minimum.

Then, too, arises the difficulty of satisfying the four sets of subscribers. These purchasers of season tickets for Monday, Wednesday, Friday nights and Saturday matinee must be treated as much alike as possible. Each wishes to hear his share of the repertory, as well as his quota of the principal singers. Now, I must guarantee my principal singers so many appearances during the season, must arrange the singing schedule of each one so that the required number of days elapses be-

tween each appearance, to give the singer an opportunity to recover voice and strength; and yet I must see to it that the various sets of subscribers hear each singer equally often! So my opera repertory is designed by hard and set rules, the casts of which are made up by ledger, so to speak.

In addition to this I must consider the request that a majority of subscribers, on certain nights, do not crave Wagner operas; therefore I must provide Italian or French forms of operatic amusement for them. Even if every detail goes through, according to the complicated schedule prepared, it involves a colossal amount of labor and patience; but it never goes quite smoothly. Sickness and sudden indispositions are among the habits of every operatic family, and the whims of a single prima donna may upset the arrangements of a whole week of opera. Then, resulting from such an unhelped-for event, when a change becomes necessary it is in most cases a thankless, begging task to find substitutes at the eleventh hour. Few prima donnas of first rank and salary will appear in the place of a whimsical sister if the name of the one to be substituted has not been effectively blazed from billboards and newspapers on the morning of the performance.

It seems to take vanity, voice, temperament and brains to make a great singer; and these qualities are so seldom distributed in equal proportion. This whole community of men and women associated with grand opera, from the fabulously paid singer down to the most humbly placed chorister, is a sensitively equipped lot. The petty wranglings of the minor ones and the haughty differences of the operatically mighty ones all help to complicate the vast system of operating. Discipline is a difficult quality to instil; and here, in its stead, proud independence stalks frankly about. Contentions of the various labor unions must be met, as well as the grievances of individuals—all of which are conditions that are unknown in European opera houses, where military

precision and discipline prevail, to the eternal benefit of the artistic value of the performances.

Because of the enormous box-office receipts at the Metropolitan Opera House, it is believed that even the impossible can be accomplished here, on account of the money available. While it is true that a vast sum is taken in during a short season, on the other hand, the expenditures are proportionately as vast. The absolute renovation of the stage at the beginning of my term here made it necessary to start with a huge deficit; so now a great share of the profits is directed toward wiping out at least a portion of that deficit. And those who note my enormous receipts with envy scarcely stop to realize that the weekly cost of giving opera at the Metropolitan varies from fifty thousand to sixty thousand dollars. And if a New York season has been brought to a successful termination, there still stares me in the face the possibility of a loss on the road tour.

The latter has become a necessity because of the long term of engagements that I must offer the great artists in order to persuade them to come over here at all. Nor does it seem quite possible that I can ever extend my New York season to ample length so that all travel may be unnecessary, for opera here is largely a matter of social importance, and when the social season is at an end public interest in opera seems also to wane. One of my fondest dreams is that I may be allowed to concentrate all my energies upon giving opera only in New York, and to this end I have extended the coming season a fortnight, planning to save myself at least the long trip into the far West.

If I achieve this saving it will be one move nearer my goal of perfect opera; then, with practically the same force of helpers engaged season after season I am hoping that the artistic excellence of the several stage performances may rise gradually to some plane approaching the high mark that is my conscientious artistic goal; but I

cannot promise to achieve this so long as the controlling conditions still prevail.

Ideal grand opera in New York is only possible with the aid of a subsidy. A fund of three hundred thousand dollars each season is necessary to endow the scheme of giving opera at the Metropolitan Opera House. That my sincerity in this matter be not questioned I offer to contribute my share—say, ten thousand dollars—to this fund. With such a fund in hand at the beginning of the season I would invite subscription for only four operas each week. Each one of these works would then be given ample and thorough rehearsals. Scenically the results would be perfect; and the musicians in the orchestra, not being compelled to play at eight performances each week in addition to the rehearsals even now necessary, would be free of fatigue and worry. Thus everyone concerned would be keyed up for each performance, and nothing short of ideal opera would result. Of profit there could scarcely be any possibility, but it would be the most perfect opera in the world because scenically it would be equal to the best productions abroad, and the ensemble of artists employed would be of the Metropolitan standard, which means the most famous singers to be had.

But without such a subsidy the present plan of giving opera here must continue. I cannot afford to miss giving a performance, even if the opera is not sufficiently rehearsed, because the expenses of production are so huge that I dare take no chances of losing a night's receipts. I slight no opportunity of improving the present forces employed, and I salve my artistic conscience by doing everything in my power to better the slightest detail as well as the greatest points of importance. But until the Metropolitan Opera House becomes a liberally subsidized institution the ideal opera that I would like to present to New York audiences must remain an unrealized dream, the height of my ambition.

SOUTHERN PRIDE

By Edith Rickert

IT is a curious experiment to come suddenly upon a rival in a twenty years' past love-affair, and find that the splendid youth whom you envied has become a sodden, diamond-studded wretch.

When Norris met Kingley in the Café Carondelet, his first impulse was to cry out with the Pharisee, "Lord, I thank Thee!" his second, to stand mutely aside and let the creature pass; but in the end he waited, stiff and courteous, for the other man to swagger up and patronize him. It was not so difficult to keep cool with the advantages of slim height and a reposeful manner, over the squatty and offensive dowdiness before him. Besides—and here was the great point—both had lost the girl.

They mellowed into a certain degree of amiability, if not friendliness, over absinthe and cigars. And Kingley, when he had got over his surprise that Norris had deigned to soil his feet again with Mississippi mud after treading the wonderful heights of Broadway, abounded in the news and scandal of the Crescent City. According to his version, everybody who hadn't gone to the devil already was hard on the road, and all the unlynched deserved hanging.

But throughout this gabble one name was never mentioned. Norris's questions circled nearer and nearer, poised over a word, but did not drop; and finally he was silent altogether, watching the little man before him with an intent gaze that seemed to try to force him to speak.

Kingley shuffled awhile, at last grew restless and moved to go.

"Well, Norris, you're a lucky dog—gone one better than the rest of us, you know. It takes you proud fellows to do that. Now I——"

Into the pause that followed Norris inserted a slow, "By the way——"

Kingley gaped—almost with apprehension, it seemed—then suddenly forestalled the question with a rush.

"I suppose you know that Polly Percival is keeping a boarding-house?"

Norris contemplated in silence a comic drawing on the front page of a *Figaro*. "No—I didn't know."

"Esplanade street," continued Kingley nervously. "First class. Making money—you bet."

Norris straightened his shoulders a trifle more and asked, with his eyes still bent on the inane drawing: "What's the number?"

"Forty-two *bis*." Then he added, with an air of buttonholing in confidence, "I go there to see her—sometimes."

"Where's Percival?" asked Norris indifferently.

"Lord! Don't you know? You *have* dropped us! He cut and run years ago—left Polly in the lurch—came back, though, now and then, and sucked up the funds. Tough customer—old Perce."

"Divorce—?" began Norris.

"So we said. She wouldn't listen—Southern pride, you know. Ah, she's a little devil of a woman herself, is Polly, as I've told her."

"What happened?" interrupted Norris brusquely.

"After nine or ten years he got D. T. and died. Considerate of him, wasn't it?"

"Very," admitted Norris, and added sarcastically: "No doubt she nursed him and forgave him on his death-bed."

"Not she. Didn't go near him. But she paid to have him looked after. That's where I helped her. Perce always had a fancy for me."

"Indeed? Ah, yes, I remember. I must be off now."

"Got anything on tomorrow? Come to the races. Some of the fellows are going to have a blow-out afterward at the St. Louis."

But his invitation was declined so curtly that he was left abashed; and when he had recovered he dropped into his chair again and lit a fresh cigar, with uncomplimentary remarks about the blighted unheavenly pride of the blazing scallawag who climbed on other people's shoulders to look down upon his betters.

The man of business who prided himself on wasting few moments awoke from a profound contemplation of a muddy gutter and wondered how long he had been standing there. Two pickaninnies angling for crayfishes in the slime grinned at his helplessness and offered for a few picayunes to show him anything in the place. And it was by following the paddling of their bare feet that he came to the wide, ostentatious street where she, Polly Sladen—no, Percival, Percival—kept boarders.

He hesitated awhile at the gate, contrasting the gaudy gingerbread lattice-work of the new house with the plain, heavy columns of her old home at Chalmette. He dreaded meeting the woman. Would she have sunk, like Kingley? As he stood there with his hand on the iron gate, the sun dropped behind the magnolias and the swift chill of the December twilight crept behind him. He shivered slightly, and went in.

Yes, Mrs. Percival was at home and would see him. He had given no name; and doubtless she thought him a prospective boarder.

He waited long and in much discomfort in the luxurious, fire-lit draw-

ing-room. If it were merely that he had got into the wrong house, it would not so much matter; but these things—associated with Polly Sladen! Under the oppression of velvet carpet and velvet chairs, the glitter of marble and cut-glass pendants, the sickening fragrance of pastilles recently burned, he had a swift memory of polished wood chairs on shining floors, of long, straight curtains blowing in and out of great windows—of space and sunshine and sweet air—Chalmette as it had lived with him during the long years of his struggle into a career.

There came a rustle of silk in the open door; and he set his lips more firmly, ready for any shock that Time might have been preparing. But after all there was very little. Prim enough she looked in her black gown with its narrow bands of white at neck and wrists. The fire-glow touched her pale face and her pale hair elaborately curled and coifed. Artificial she might be—a little—but serene and remote from the vulgar room.

So much he had judged when the polite smile on her face died away, and her lips parted as in a cry, but made no sound.

He had pity of her as he seized the cold hand that she held out, rather with a gesture of pushing him away than of welcome; but in a moment she was quiet and self-contained as she greeted him, though her eyes were darkened and shining with a look of wonder.

"Perhaps we'd better have some light," she said, in a matter-of-fact tone that wavered a little toward the end.

He scarcely heeded the words, being absorbed in consideration as to how her voice—the voice that used to sing *Ave Marias* to him in the twilight—was still as sweet and yet so profoundly changed.

But when she moved toward the bell-rope, he started and stammered excuses, and drew out his own match-box. Thereupon she dropped upon a hideous brocaded sofa near the fire, exclaiming with sudden breathlessness, "Not just yet—please!"

There was a silence broken by the click of his box as he shut it. She had turned her face away from the glow, and he studied the little turquoise star in her ear.

"I can't see you very well," he demurred.

And then she made matters worse by motioning him to sit by her side, so that he could not, without pointed rudeness, look at her at all.

"Why have you come back?" she asked gently.

"Why did I ever go away?" he retorted.

"To make your fortune. And you have made it. I know—and I'm glad. But I never expected to see you here again."

"I remember making a vow never to come—when I was young," he said musingly.

"But those vows are made to be broken," she declared.

"Especially when it's profitable to do so. It was too good a case to lose—and there was some research to be done——"

"Ah!"

"But I came here to see you."

"That was kind of you. I hear you're a great man now——"

"Who told you that?"

"Well"—she seemed reluctant—

"Mr. Kingley, for one."

"Kingley? Does he come here?"

"Sometimes."

There was a tramp of feet on the gallery outside; the front door opened and banged. Then came the sound of men's voices loud in dispute, and a woman's, giggling in a high, hysterical key in some attempt at making peace between them. There followed an oath, a little shriek and a stream of sharp scolding that died away up the stairs.

Norris could not refrain from turning to look at his companion. She sat erect and still, with her hands folded in her lap, but with tightly compressed lips. She began to talk nervously; but he presently fell to thinking and forgot that he was staring at her, so that he was startled when

she rose and said apologetically that she must go now; it was time to dress for dinner and it would never do to be late. "I should ask you to stop, only——"

He deliberately refused to help her out.

"Only—only our table is full, and it—it might not be pleasant for you. I—I——"

"It would inconvenience you," he said gravely, looking about for his hat.

Then her head went high. "Not in the least. I shall be delighted. Will you stay?"

He accepted promptly, wondering at himself as he did so. What concern of his how Polly Sladen managed her boarding-house?

She moved away to dress, and stopped at the door. "I hope you'll—like—my other—guests," she said, with a faint laugh.

Presently, as he sat alone in the dusky room, the outer door banged again and there was talking in the hall. Once a man's head was thrust in and instantly withdrawn; and a shrill woman's voice followed: "Who's the old boy? No, I won't hush—he *is* an old boy, isn't he? Oh! I shouldn't wonder—she's a sly cat, for all her airs. It's a good thing, my dear, that you showed horse-sense this one day."

Then came a rushing sound as of one person chasing another upstairs, and silence.

Red embers of pine-wood slabs turn themselves all too readily into memories and dreams. Norris was not aware that Mrs. Percival had returned until he heard her voice asking him to light up.

As he rose to do her bidding, he felt her finger-tips on his elbow.

"I hate so to have you do it," she said.

"Why?"

"I have—changed," she answered, scarcely above a whisper; "and I wish you had gone away in the dark—without seeing me."

"What does it matter? We all change," he said coldly.

She moved away then without further speech; and when he looked for her in the sudden blaze of light that made the room glare upon him like a trumpet, she was standing far away by the window, with her back half turned, taking some violets out of a bowl to fasten in her sprigged muslin gown. After a moment she turned and went toward him, thin and white-faced with a redness about the eyes that powder could not hide, with her hair plainly parted as in the old days and the blue stars gone from her ears.

"Well?" she challenged him.

"You are very pale," he commented.

"I usually rouge a little." Her lips and eyes were defiant. "One must keep up appearances when one has—guests."

"No doubt," he said absently, twirling a handful of the sickening pastilles that awaited burning, in a Japanese jar. She came suddenly close, caught them away and flung them into the embers. But before he could demand an explanation, the dinner-bell rang.

"Shall we go in?" she asked, smiling sweetly. "They'll come down when they're ready."

The dining-room was rather worse than the parlor. It glittered in a way to make the eyes blink and set the teeth on edge. Above the fireplace hung a huge stag's head with serene amber eyes staring into space above the mess of flowers, glass, silver-plate and gaudy china.

Norris glanced about with an air of severe distaste as he went through a form of introduction with the Shuttlewoods, the Donnellys, Mrs. Higgins and Mr. Oliver Fadden. They seemed to him equally vulgar; the Shuttlewoods with their robin's egg diamonds, Mrs. Donnelly with her affectation of *pince-nez*, Donnelly blurting in his gumbo, Mrs. Higgins insolent through powder and paint and false front, and the fatuous, red-nosed Oliver, who gazed openly at Mrs. Percival across the table.

And the intolerable part of it was that she—Polly Sladen—the girl who

had turned the course of his life and driven him North twenty years ago—she was affable to the creatures. She sympathized with Donnelly because he had won, and with Shuttlewood because he had lost; she admired Mrs. Donnelly's new gown and Mrs. Shuttlewood's new ring, and she inquired anxiously into Higgins's welfare—the while a muffled stamping and cursing went on overhead, as of a man in a blue rage with drink. She allowed Oliver to comment—unsnubbed—on her nun-like appearance with the straight bands of hair. She was not the old Polly Sladen; she was Percival's widow—the keeper of a boarding-house.

Norris maintained a grim silence, inwardly cursing Percival for the mischief he had done, cursing himself that pride had driven him North to make his way because he had been poor and her father had owned great lands that called for money, cursing her that she had fallen away from the high womanhood that he had known in her twenty year before. The sting of the words, "sly cat," lingered with him, and yet when he glanced at her pale, downcast face bent encouragingly upon the two little Shuttlewoods, a boy and girl who clung together consumed with shyness, he was more sorrowful than angry.

The talk was of that day's racing. Donnelly, a florid man with a barbaric mustache drooping over his turn-down collar, was for chipping in to buy fireworks in honor of the New Year; Shuttlewood, dry and anemic, observed sarcastically that he would pawn Mrs. S.'s diamonds to do so. While she was playfully making it clear to the table that his own would go first, Mrs. Donnelly wearily laid down her soup spoon.

"Is it not as you like it?" asked Mrs. Percival hastily.

"I prefer it hot—thank you," said the voice that had uttered "sly cat."

"Them that's late can't expect hot soup," put in Mrs. Shuttlewood, with vigor.

"Come, now, Maria, look out or you'll be in hot water in a minute,"

observed her melancholy husband; and, "One for you, Penelope," said he of the drooping mustache.

"I am sorry about the soup," said Mrs. Percival in a low voice. "I'll ask Jasper to——"

"Oh, it doesn't matter; it's too peppery, anyway. It's such an art—making gumbo."

"Peppery?" sniffed Mrs. Shuttlewood. "Are you sure the taste of it isn't in your own mouth, Mrs. D.?"

Dagger glances flashed across the table, while Mrs. Percival continued in a low, shamed voice: "Next time I'll ask cook to take yours out before she seasons the rest."

The muffled sounds overhead grew into a stampede.

"Poor Dick!" said Mrs. Higgins plaintively. "He's been waiting all this while for his dinner, I know. I can't see why—when we pay for service—Oliver, do go up and quiet him, will you?"

The red-nosed youth arose, lurching a little. "What's the good havin' a sister?" he chuckled, and stopped at Mrs. Percival's side a moment, even laying his hand on her shoulder as he stooped and whispered in her ear.

Her face flamed, but she did not withdraw—not even when Shuttlewood and Donnelly roared together at the picture of the sentimental cub scarcely able to stand for liquor.

When the waves of talk had broken over the table again Mrs. Percival leaned forward and said almost stealthily to Norris: "I'm sorry that you won't see Mrs. Pole. She's my companion—away just now." She knew that his cold eyes were asking, "Why make matters worse by trying to lie?"

For the rest of the dinner she sat silent, crumbling a bit of bread and smiling only when specially addressed.

And when at last Donnelly had dragged Shuttlewood off to buy Roman candles and "nigger-chasers" to make the children and themselves merry, and Mrs. Percival had promised to mix punch for them all at midnight to drink in the New Year, she

and her guest were left alone among the coffee-cups.

"Well," she defied him as he sat staring at a grease spot near Donnelly's place, "I hope you liked it—and us?"

"Come out into the open," he answered. "I'm choking here."

And when they stood together on the gallery, in the still moonlight, with the faint odor of sweet olive all about them, he asked painfully—almost groaned:

"What on earth does it mean?"

"Mean?" she asked. "It means that people change—a little—in twenty years. Can't you realize that?"

He plucked and ruthlessly tore to bits a spray of the fragrant blossoms that touched his hand.

"You are not the Polly I once knew," he said.

"Oh, no!" she laughed again. "The girl was sold—with the old house at Chalmette."

"To Percival?"

"We won't speak of him—please."

"Why did I ever go North?" He seemed hardly aware that he had spoken.

"Because you were proud, of course," she said lightly, and added, after a pause: "And now that you have seen, don't trouble to be polite. Besides, I must be ready soon for punch—and—and fireworks."

"Why do you burn pastilles in—there?" he demanded. He could not call that place her home.

"Why, because—because—perhaps because I am proud, too," she answered irrelevantly, as it seemed.

"Do you like living this way?" he demanded again.

"Yes," she answered, without a flicker of the eyelids.

"And those—people? And this—place?"

"Very much." Her glance was a challenge, and she smiled faintly.

And yet for all her directness, even with the persistent memory of Mrs. Donnelly's sneer, he had a sudden overmastering impulse to save her from herself—to take her away—for

the sake of the little Polly of long ago who had loved all things good and beautiful.

"You are content, then?" he asked again breathlessly.

"Oh, quite."

Yet he would not give up. "As an old friend—may I ask—happy?"

Her eyes wavered a little. "How could I be more so—unless—unless I married—you said you saw him today—Mr. Kingley?"

He burned with sudden rage at the thought that she, too, was growing vulgar—all the world had grown vulgar. And then, to his intense amazement, he found that the flame had burned up his pride; he found himself pleading brokenly:

"Come away—North—with me—Polly."

There was a pause during which a shaky tenor began caroling somewhere upstairs:

"Oh, give me a girl—and a glass of champagne—a glass and a—a girl—I'll—I'll—never go—go—go—go—home from Dick—Dixie—a—gug—gain—I'll never——"

Then Polly turned her eyes straight upon him. "No—thank you," she said sweetly.

"Is that all? Not a word——?"

"Good night." She held out her hand. "Ah, here come the 'nigger-chasers.' Good night, Mr. Norris. I hope you'll have a pleasant journey."

He stood alone on the shell walk under the magnolias—dismissed.

And yet like a foolish boy he hung over the iron gate and watched the fireworks on the lawn—listened vainly for her voice among the babble and laughter of those she called her guests. And presently, when the garden was left to the moonlight, and lamps gleamed out above with a glimpse of little Shuttlewoods being put to bed, he drew out his watch and wondered why he was waiting. She must be mixing the punch, then; in ten minutes she would be drinking with that rabble, and he was powerless to stop it. He might have stopped her marrying Percival—twenty years ago—but

he went North to make a fortune because he would not ask her to be poor with him. Well—she was not poor now.

He was roused by the clink of iron and perceived a woman, with a traveling-bag set on the pavement, struggling with the rusty latch. He must have jammed it as he went out.

She started back as he emerged from the shadow to her assistance, then gave a little cry and spoke his name.

"You don't know me?" she asked. "I was Miss Polly's governess at Chalmette; Mrs. Pole—now—don't you remember?"

She had not lied, then.

"Ah, we've both seen trouble since then," she continued. "You are coming in?"

He shook his head, unable at the moment to speak.

"It's an unearthly hour to arrive—but I've been staying with my sister, and I promised to be home by New Year's if I could. Our train was three hours late; but the electric cars are quite safe. I don't like to leave her long with those—those people."

"Why does she keep them?" he flashed into the midst of her inconsequences.

"Why?"—she was as quick as he—"for the money. Not a penny left—not a man to support her—that's what the war did for her. And Percival a gambler! Oh, do you ask *why*?" The woman seemed on the verge of tears.

"But why not have refined people?" he insisted. "Why just these——?"

"To keep off the worse—oh, you don't know. She's had worse. These pay. And they're only vulgar. Who comes to New Orleans—except for the races? Why, she's—she nearly lost everything at first, trying to keep up the old way. And now—now she pleases them very well—the house is furnished to their taste—and the money——"

"Yes—the money?" he cried fiercely.

"She paid the last of his creditors—Percival's—three months ago, and when she has paid for the furniture in the house now——"

But he was halfway up the shell walk, had flung through the screen door and straight into the dining-room, where she was bending over the punch-bowl and Donnelly was tasting.

He saw no one but herself as he said, in a tone that would take no refusal, "I must see you at once; it's important."

He held the door open, waiting, with his eyes on the floor. A moment she glanced about bewildered at the coarse, grinning faces; then she put her hand up to her forehead and passed out before him.

He did not speak until they were on the gallery again.

"You will tell all those people to go tomorrow," he said.

She looked at him wonderingly.

"And you will let Mrs. Pole manage the auction. We shall take the ninety-two train Saturday night."

"Mrs. Pole?" she echoed faintly.

"She has returned—gone upstairs just now. I have been talking with her."

She flushed deeply and moved away several steps, turning her back on him, as if to go in.

"I have been a fool these twenty years," he began.

"Then it's rather late to take up a new profession," she assented, with light bitterness.

"Tomorrow begins the New Year."

"Well, what of it?" She did not turn.

"You will help me."

"Indeed?"

"Polly—don't be so—proud."

She faced him then, smiling a little.

"I?" she said gently. "I—proud?"

He knew that he deserved it, and the knowledge made him fierce. She did not resist—not even when he kissed her forehead, her cheek—but she turned her face into the shadow, and he heard the word *punch* in her murmur.

"Not you," he said. "You are at my bidding now. I'll go in, if necessary; but they won't like the punch."

It was long before he could get her face to the light again.

"Well, look at the old woman, then," said the voice of Polly Sladen, of Chalmette.

"She's come back—bless her!" he ejaculated. "I knew she would; but I hardly expected it so soon. I can make the old woman young, Polly—this way—and this—and this. What made you act so, Polly?"

"What made you?" she retorted.

"You would have let me go back without a sign?"

"You would have gone!"

"Ah, we're both to blame," he admitted. "Which of the seven deadly sins is it?"

"We needn't give it a name now," she said and added, in a whisper, "I'd rather say—David."

And at that very moment the bells of the cathedral began to ring in the New Year.



AN EXPLANATION

SHE—Did your friend inherit his taste for liquor?

HE—No; he acquired it. His wife married him because he didn't drink.



IT is a pity that when people reach the age of discretion they do not stay there.

THE WOMAN WITH THE REINS

YOU take your course with careless rein
 And airy hand through park and square—
 Too well you know the paths of pain!

And who would dream you could disdain
 Life's curb and bondage, smiling there?
 You take your course with careless rein.

Who guesses at Love's broken chain
 And blood-flecked bit, from your light air?
 Too well you know the paths of pain!

Your laughing lips not once complain
 Of each old pang you used to bear—
 You take your course with careless rein.

Nor shall men see Love's fire again
 Beneath your smile so debonair—
 Too well you know the paths of pain!

So, hot, rebellious heart, remain
 Still glad and smiling to their stare,
 And take your course with careless rein—
 Too well you know the paths of pain!

ARTHUR STRINGER.



THE IDEA!

MARJORIE—Dolly and her mother are often mistaken for sisters.

MADGE—Did Dolly tell you so?

"No; her mother did."



"THEY say she suffers a great deal from nervousness."

"Perhaps she does, but she doesn't suffer nearly so much as those who have to live with her."

THE PROFESSOR AND THE BURGLAR

By Harry Arthur Thompson

“DANNY!” called Mrs. Martin from the combination dining-room and nursery.

The stout man in the bedroom grunted as he stooped to thrust into the farther end of the closet a small parcel that he had taken from his overcoat pocket.

“Da-a-an-ny!”

Mr. Martin threw some old clothes over the package, ambled ponderously to the open door and disclosed to his wife a countenance which, though pleasant on ordinary occasions, now reflected no little perturbation.

“Wotcha want?” he demanded.

“Danny, you just mind Archibald while I run over to Mis’ Walton’s.”

“Well, be back soon; I got to go out.”

“Wotcha goin’ out at this time of night for?” Mrs. Martin asked.

Dan transferred his weight first to one foot, then to the other; with his forefinger he scratched himself on the cheek under the ear. Then he said shortly and with rising color, “Business.”

“Do you mean a job?” she asked eagerly.

“Somethin’ of that sort,” he replied evasively.

“Well, the Lord knows it’s time,” was Mrs. Martin’s pious comment. “It’s been eight weeks sence you lost your job at the factory, and what money we got left Archibald could hold in his little hand. Is it night-watchman’s work?”

“Somethin’ of that sort.” This after a meditative pause and another scratch. “Yes, there’s some watchin’ about it.”

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“‘Somethin’ of that sort!’” mimicked Mrs. Martin. “Can’t you give a plain answer to a plain question? What’s the matter with you? The Lord knows night-watchin’ ain’t no disgrace, and in some ways it’s a blessin’; ‘spesh’ly your bein’ home in the daytime and helpin’ with the baby. I’ll say one thing for you, even if it does make you conceity—you’re mighty handy with Archibald.”

Danny grinned sheepishly at the compliment and waved a large deprecatory hand. Then with an effort of will he forced himself to the point of repartee and said, “Tut, tut!”

“But you are handy,” reiterated Mrs. Martin. “Now, they’s some men jest as helpless with babies as kittens; afraid of droppin’ them and not knowin’ the difference between colic and plain teethin’. But I guess your bein’ home all day makes it different; I’ve learned you a lot and you’ve learned a lot yourself.”

“Sorter seems like you’re givin’ me a character as nuss-gal, Sally,” Dan retorted. “All I need is a cap and apron.”

“G’long with your jokes, Danny,” said Mrs. Martin, smiling. “And, Danny, I do hope it is a job,” laying a tremulous hand on his arm. “You’re sober and honest and—and you’ve been a good husband to me.” Her voice quavered a little and the tears were perilously near her eyes. Then she threw a shawl over her head and went out.

Going into the bedroom, Danny raised a window and peered cautiously out. Satisfying himself that his wife had gone down the street he closed

the sash, went to the closet, took out the package and laid it upon the bed.

"Sober and honest!" he muttered, untying the string. "And out of work two months and can't get a job! It's jest as Bill Trickey says, 'Them as has gits, and them as hasn't gits it in the neck.' I'd rather have a good, steady job at night-watchin'; it's safer and comfortabler. But what's the use? Bill's right," he soliloquized, opening the package; "the world owes you a livin'. These rich corporations and the big trusts—they're all thieves with their watered stock and their bribery and their grindin' down us workin' people. 'Big thieves,' says Bill, 'big and smart—smart enough to keep on the right side of the jail.'"

"Sober and honest! Oh, Lord!" He was spreading out on the bed the contents of the package. "'Here's a job that's easy,' says Bill; 'light work, genteel and refined. No experience necessary and no references required.'"

"'But is it honest?'" says I to Bill.

"'Honest?'" says Bill. "What's that got to do with it? Who's honest nowadays? Don't you ever read the magazines?" Bill always was a reader and the greatest feller for arguin' and makin' black look white."

By this time there was disclosed on the bed a small electric lantern, a black mask, a glass-cutter, a ball of putty and a bunch of keys.

"Bill didn't say nothin' about the mask," Dan remarked; "but I best take it along, anyway—I'd hate to get recognized." And then a profound sigh escaped his lips. "Somehow er other, I don't like it, gallivantin' around o' nights at my age, burglarin'. It don't seem strictly honest, even if Bill did prove it was."

At this moment there smote on the stillness of the night a querulous wail. Hastily gathering together the various implements of his new profession Dan wrapped them together, and after placing the package in the hall closet tiptoed his ponderous bulk to the crib-side of the infant Archibald.

Immersed in an occupation wherein

he stood on firm ground, all his hesitation vanished. Swiftly he passed to the kitchen, filled a pan with hot water, set in it a bowl of milk and retraced his steps to the crib.

In the kitchen he transferred the warm milk to a bottle. As the rubber mouthpiece touched young Archibald's lips a howl was arrested at its period of crescendo and there followed a grunt of satisfied desire, succeeded by a silence of pure content, broken now and then by a gentle gurgle.

Dan gazed at his son, his face beaming with foolish fatherly pride. Then he said softly:

"I got to do it. That kid must be taken care of."

A neighboring clock droned off eleven strokes that night as a ponderous figure made its way through the shadows toward the more aristocratic part of town.

II

PROFESSOR TOMPKINS—or, to give him his full name as it appeared in the college catalogue, Helmholtz Kant Tompkins, Ph.D.—told the story on himself; told it with that sheepish, deprecatory smile of his that had disarmed so many enemies and won so many friends: that once when he had gone to his room to prepare for a journey to New York he found himself at the last stage of his preparations for the trip arrayed in his pajamas and about to crawl into bed. One-half of society merely chuckled over this absent-minded side of the gentle professor; the other half respected his scholarship and read with admiration, if not with understanding, his latest book, "The Psychology of Adolescence."

Therefore, society was divided in its attitude toward a much discussed wedding. Part of it wondered why a girl of Grace Carlton's social promise should have married such a dry-as-dust scholar; the other part expressed, with a disregard for reticence, its amazement that a man of Professor Tompkins's profound learning should so handicap his future by marrying such a

frivolous young person as Miss Carlton. Inasmuch as after three years of the experiment Professor and Mrs. Tompkins smiled amiably at the world, lovingly at each other and ecstatically at their son, aged nine months, society shelved the *mésalliance* with other unsolved social puzzles, and dutifully left the customary number of cards at the Tompkins door.

Three years under the same roof with an extremely alive young woman had added to Professor Tompkins's material comfort, the while they discovered, to his amazement, the widening scope of the special branch of science to which he had devoted his life. To write with authority upon the subject of infant phenomena when one has no infant phenomenon in the house had seemed merely a part of the day's work. Now that there was an adolescent mind at hand for scientific study, and a young, but opinionated mother nearby to prick the bubble of theory with the scorn of practical knowledge, Professor Tompkins's dogmatism was fast giving way to a tentative and bewildered state of mind.

He had observed in Mrs. Tompkins not even a dormant interest in infant psychology; yet when the wonderful miracle was accomplished, the young mother proceeded to assume the care of her offspring with an assurance that was amazing. She seemed no more dismayed by lack of previous thought and study to qualify for the functions of maternal care than she was staggered by its tremendous responsibilities. Calmly she washed, fed and dressed the boy with all the insouciance of a girl with her dolls. A few hours' reading of the best text-books—and somehow she seemed to know the best intuitively—and she had absorbed, as a sponge does water, the necessary essentials. In four weeks she discovered evidences of amazing ignorance on the part of the trained nurse; in six, she was instructing the attending physician.

One afternoon this wonderful mother observed to Professor Tompkins: "Look, he's smiling at you!"

"My dear," was the answer in a precise tone, "the accumulated data resulting from the scientific study of infant phenomena leads conclusively to the opinion that a child of his age does not really smile. It is a reflex action of the risible muscles induced by some slight—er—colicky condition," he finished lamely.

"Risible reflex fiddlesticks!" Mrs. Tompkins retorted.

On another occasion:

"What *do* you think? The boy said 'dada' today. He pronounced it quite distinctly."

"It is quite beyond the limits of credulity to believe that the normal child of his age recognizes the paternal relation, although there are, of course, certain well-known recorded observations of infant precocity," replied the professor. "The vocal utterance to which you refer is, I believe, generally regarded as an inarticulate expression due to a pleasurable sensation of the cerebral molecules occasioned by the stimulation of the optic nerve."

"Nonsense! If you heard him say 'dada' you'd know he meant you."

"But, my dear, there is a finality about these results of scientific observation that we cannot question. Allowances must be made for maternal enthusiasm."

It was outraged motherhood that flashed back at him:

"With all your book knowledge"—there was a slight emphasis on the word book that was almost tantamount to a sneer—"I believe that if you were left alone with that blessed boy and had to take care of him you would be as helpless as he."

A few hours later Professor Tompkins closed a book of reference, using his finger as a book-mark, and lifted a pair of pale blue eyes, into which he vainly endeavored to recall a look of interest, to Mrs. Tompkins, who was insisting on some comprehension of her parting instructions.

"The baby is not likely to awaken," she was saying, "but if he does Katy will look after him. I shall take Alice

with me, as I may not be home until late."

"Is Mrs. Morgan critically ill?" he questioned.

"It isn't Margaret who is ill," she patiently explained; "it's her baby. And the baby would be all right, I am sure, if Margaret only would be firm and use common sense. She started in wrong. She should have trained the baby from the very beginning; they soon learn. I suppose every time she cries Margaret takes her up and feeds her."

"Really?" he remarked conversationally.

"Yes, and last week when I was there Margaret was actually rocking that child. I am not at all surprised to get her note asking me how I trained my baby. I could write her, I suppose, but I think it better to talk it over with her and find out just what she's been doing. Good night, dear."

"Good night, my love," the professor remarked, his thoughts immersed in his next book.

Later in the evening he was annoyed by the timid entrance of Katy, who explained that her sister was ill and "could she go and sit up with her, and she would be back by eleven, sure, sir."

He absently accorded the desired permission with a vague sense of thankfulness over an undisturbed evening.

It was nearly midnight when he was interrupted by a persistent and distracting noise. He frowned, listened a moment, and then returned to his writing. Again he was disturbed by the insistent cry. It clamored at his brain, beating down the orderly process of reasoning. Opening the window he cried "Scat!" and resumed his writing. But in vain; the cry routed every thought. It grew more clamorous; its wailing crescendo, a hauntingly familiar note, burst in upon his struggling memory.

"Bless me," he cried, "it's the baby!"

As the waves of memory lapped in Professor Tompkins was conscious of a feeling of increasing dismay. It gath-

ered substantial form as he remembered Mrs. Tompkins's absence. The maid had gone out and he had not heard her return. Irritated, he rang for her. The wail of the infant, increasing in volume, its dominant motif the anger of outraged resentment, was the only response.

Sighing, he lighted a candle and ascended to the nursery. His heir, red as to the face, moist with exudations from tear duct, nasal and salivary glands, greeted the parental entrance with a howl that suggested the opening of the full organ-stop as the congregation files out of church. Had Professor Tompkins possessed his wife's ear, trained to the nice interpretation of every modulation of their son's voice, he would have detected in the infant's cry a distinct note of triumph over a partial victory.

Shading the candle behind a propped-up book on the table, the professor approached the crib and surveyed the joy of his life and the disturber of his peace.

"Bless me!" he said helplessly.

At which young Tompkins stiffened his legs, arched his chest and emitted a yell that made his previous efforts seem, by comparison, the work of a novice.

Vaguely the professor remembered that there was something said about taking up a child when it cried. What Mrs. Tompkins really said was that the modern and, therefore, the correct method of training was *not* to take it up. It was to his credit that he remembered so much of his wife's instruction.

Accordingly, he lifted the infant gingerly and fearfully, at a loss to determine whether he would drop it before it broke in two or whether it would break in two before he dropped it. Then, in the flush of his first success he transgressed rule number two of modern infant training by seating himself in the rocking-chair and rocking the baby to the accompaniment of a crooning melody, which surprised the child no less by virtue of its novelty than it amazed the father to find that he remembered the song. It was a relic of his college days; he recalled that

as a freshman he had been taught to sing it, standing on one foot, by some visiting, though uninvited, sophomores. Professor Tompkins's colleagues might have been shocked had they heard him gravely announce:

"Forty-nine blue bottles were hanging on the wall,
Forty-nine blue bottles were hanging on the wall.
Take one blue bottle down
From off the oaken wall,
And there are forty-eight blue bottles
a-hanging on the wall."

The second stanza recognizes the existence of only forty-eight blue bottles, which in the last line are reduced to forty-seven. But the boy seemed not to worry about the loss of a mere bottle, and enjoyed the second stanza fully as much as the first. Under the influence of this astonishing musical novelty, at the period when there were but thirty-two blue bottles pendent, the baby's eyelids fluttered and in a few moments Professor Tompkins enjoyed the triumph of a father who for the first time has put his child to sleep.

When he finally ventured to place the infant in its crib it seemed as if every fibre of the chair creaked. He had hardly risen when the child opened its eyes and began that intake of the breath which heralds the coming storm. Hastily Professor Tompkins resumed his seat, his rocking and his hypnotic song.

The vocalist had reduced the number of bottles to twenty-nine and, as an experiment, had been silent some five long minutes, of sixty long seconds each, when the door was softly opened and framed in the embrasure was the huge bulk of a strange man.

"Hush!" said the professor, raising a warning forefinger. "Don't wake the baby."

There is no room in this domestic narrative to paint the surprised emotions of these two men, for the baby, awakened by his father's voice, resumed his part of the antiphon.

"Twenty-nine blue bottles," chanted the professor, glancing reproachfully at the cause of the disturbance. Alas! The novelty of the song had worn off;

the baby opened a full-diapason stop that he had not previously deigned to touch.

"Pins, mebbe," suggested Danny Martin.

"Pins?" interrogated the professor vaguely.

"Sure," said Danny, approaching; "often it's pins."

"But where?" queried the professor during the next lull.

"Here, let me see," Danny demanded.

After an investigation, "No, it ain't pins," he said.

The psychologist looked eagerly at Danny, as if to ask for another suggestion.

"Mebbe it's colic," Danny ventured.

The father clutched at this straw. There was a reasonableness about the suggestion; he had heard of colic. Yet in another moment his hopes fell. It was a remedy that he wanted, not a diagnosis.

"But what can we do?" he asked helplessly. Already he was including Danny in his troubles.

"Here, let me take him," commanded Danny.

With a sigh of relief Professor Tompkins handed over the infant. Danny, remembering certain remedies of his own household, held the child up against his shoulder, patting him soundly on the back.

"It ain't wind," said Danny as the boy continued his howls.

Mildly supplicating help from the strange being who seemed so fertile in suggestions, Professor Tompkins interrogated:

"Do you think that the pain may be superinduced by the process of dentition?"

"Huh?" said Danny.

"The acquisition of teeth."

"Teeth, hell!" said Danny. "I'll tell you what's the matter—the kid's hungry. Here it's after twelve o'clock"—consulting a huge silver timepiece which he laboriously extracted from his pocket—"and I'll bet he hasn't been fed since six."

The psychologist beamed; such logi-

cal processes of reasoning appealed to him. His admiration for this resourceful person increased.

"Ah!" he said. "I am of the opinion that your suggestion is an eminently practical one; but the question that now confronts us is: What will he eat?"

"Eat nothin'," said Danny, with fine scorn. "It's drink he wants—milk."

"Oh, to be sure," cried the professor joyfully. "How very strange that I should have forgotten that lacteal fluid is the pabulum of infants."

Danny looked at the professor admiringly; Danny appreciated good language when he heard it.

"I wonder where the milk is kept?" queried the professor.

"In the ice-box, mebbe," replied Danny, with wasted irony.

"Oh, yes, I'll go down and get it." And he started for the door.

"Here, wait a bit," Danny commanded, suspicion in his tone. "How do I know you won't give me the double-cross?"

"I beg your pardon? I don't quite follow. The—er—double-cross?"

"Sure," said Danny. He was helpless with the baby, whose cries had long since diminished to heartrending sobs. "You might telephone the p'lice."

"I had quite forgotten that," said Danny's host simply. "You will have to accept my word of honor. Besides"—he brightened at the suggestion—"your knowledge of infants is so profound that I should be exceedingly foolish to commit any overt act that would deprive me of your valuable assistance."

Danny gasped and gazed at the professor with mingled wonder and awe.

"Wouldn't that last crimp your hair?" he confided to the baby.

"All right," he said aloud; "you may be playin' me for a fool, but I'll take a chance. You seem on the level."

In a few moments Professor Tompkins returned with a nursing-bottle full of milk.

"I found the bottle in the kitchen," he announced triumphantly as Danny

deftly thrust the nipple into the baby's mouth. The psychologist seemed elated over his discovery. The burglar showed his appreciation of the other's distinct advance in practical knowledge by a grunt of grudging commendation. Both were beamingly awaiting some special token of gratification on the part of the infant; but that youngster, after one taste of the fluid, let forth one supreme howl of outraged babyhood.

"Bless me!" said the professor.

"I'll be damned!" said Danny. Helpless at the failure of the supreme test, he induced thought by scratching the spot under his ear, and then reached for the bottle. No sooner had his hand touched it than he glared at the professor, who shrank under the look of unutterable scorn.

"The milk's stone cold," Danny said.

"Well," the psychologist retorted, with some show of spirit, "I always drink my milk cold."

"Kids don't," said Danny. "Here, gimme that bottle. What you don't know about kids would fill a book."

It was a few minutes later that the professor and Danny left behind them in the nursery a good baby—that is, a baby asleep. In the dining-room the remains of a cold chicken were fast disappearing, and the talk was of babies—which led Danny to confession.

"On the level," he concluded, "I wasn't intendin' to burgle your house; but the open winder of your liberry looked so invitin'. The Lord knows I don't want to burgle anybody; but there's the missus and the kid, no job and hardly a dollar in the house."

"Can you drive?" asked the professor.

"Sure," said Danny.

"And do you understand anything about gardening?"

"I used to be a gardener."

"Suppose you call on me in the morning and we will arrange——"

But at this moment the dining-room door opened and in swept Mrs. Tompkins and the maid.

"I'm so sorry, dear," she said briskly, "but I simply *had* to stay with Margaret. She is *that* sick, and just from worrying—" Here Mrs. Tompkins caught sight of Danny, who was formally introduced as the new gardener. But she sped on breathlessly:

"And it's just as I thought—she has been over-feeding that child; she actually gives it its bottle at twelve o'clock every night."

"But, my dear," ventured the professor, "under some circumstances might it not be—er—er—advisable?"

"Never, under any circumstances," came the decisive answer. "If my baby wakes up at midnight I give him a few spoonfuls of water, turn him over and he falls sound asleep. He is never fed before two in the morning."

Danny arose to go, exchanging a sheepish glance with his new employer.

"Oh, is this your package?" asked Mrs. Tompkins, handing Danny a parcel.

"Yes, thank you, ma'am," said Danny. "It's jest a—a few things I haven't any further use for."



WITH A FAN THAT HE OWED HER

THE wind is ill that blows (at dances)
 No good to some poor man;
 And sending this, I thank the chances
 Which broke that other fan.
 But there's a side to every saying
 To take exception to:
 I hope the wind this sets a-playing
 May blow no ill to you.

WARWICK JAMES PRICE.



WHERE THE PROFIT COMES IN

WILLIE—I never knew but one man who ever derived any benefit from reading articles on how to succeed.

WALLACE—Indeed? I should like to know his name.

"Banks. He persisted in it until he got so he could write them himself."



JASPAR—Is T. Frenzy Rocks really rich?

JUMPUPPE—Well, no. But he at least has enough to make him dissatisfied.

BESIDE THE ROAD

FROM my still cottage, off the road,
 I see the noisy world go by,
 Forever driven by the goad,
 Forever bending to the load,
 Unmindful of the sky.

The spring is here; today I found
 A bed of golden daffodils;
 I threw them to the passing throng,
 But could not make them pause for long,
 Nor join me on the hills.

I know a bank beneath the trees,
 Where fragrant purple violets blow;
 I plucked the fairest, on my knees;
 Their tender beauty seemed to please
 Those plodding ones below.

But when I beckoned toward the wood
 They did not turn and follow me;
 Yet by their eyes I understood
 They longed to gather flowers, and would—
 If they were only free.

But oh, it is not always spring!
 Winter that smites all blossoms dead
 Will find my throng still laboring
 Toward the same hollow, nameless Thing—
 But Youth and Passion fled!

ELSA BARKER.



A NATURAL CONCLUSION

RYER—He is quite a clubman, isn't he?
 DYER—What makes you think so?
 "I've met his wife."



THE more one has his leg pulled the shorter he becomes.

THE SKELETON IN THE CLOSET

By Zillah M. Sherman

1880

AS Hiram Ruggles's square-set figure lounged up the back steps, the frying pork gave one final expiring splutter. Without some rebellious sizzling, however, it had not added to the prudent store of grease in the yellow bowl on the table. The bespattered stove testified to its leaps of resistance against the fate of diminishing to a crisp, appetizing brown.

When, with dripping face soused under the red pump on the porch, Hiram slouched into the kitchen, Mrs. Ruggles did not look up. Among the agricultural class salutations often seem superfluous. In the same skillet in which the pig, by fire, had been purified of its sputtering radicalism, in order that the concoction might be agreeably seasoned by the atmosphere of its late rich tenant, she was stirring the milk gravy. Her long face, terminating in the broad, firm jaw, framed in smooth bands of iron-gray hair, had the fixity of a countenance unaccustomed to smiles.

Mr. Ruggles stolidly arranged his wet locks before the little mirror, the crack, running diagonally across its surface, meanwhile causing it to play Puck-like freaks with his sun-cured visage. The parting in the hair secured by his efforts, if not satisfying a geometrician's ideal of a straight line, at least testified good intentions. He completed his dinner toilet by giving a twitch to the aged suspenders, the somewhat frail bond which held his blue overalls.

Hiram satisfied the first keen edge of his appetite before vouchsafing a remark of any kind. One might have

imagined these two people were performing the rites of some grim ceremonial. Finally, with a load of pork, egg and potato poised on his knife ready to be emptied into his gastronomic reservoir, he said, "Wal, I s'pose we've got to 'tend that funeral tomorrer!"

With the noise of a suction-pipe, taking a huge swallow of tea from his saucer, he glanced at the impassive face opposite. Mrs. Ruggles, apparently undisturbed by this scrutiny, poured a little more tea from the tin pot into her cup, and made no reply.

"I say," he volunteered again, "I guess we'll have to go!"

Evidently the lady of the house was not in a conversational mood. For any manifestation she gave thereof, she and the large gray cat, brushing obsequiously against her dark print gown, might have been the sole occupants of the kitchen. Her husband audibly masticated another miraculous mouthful and then continued his theme.

"It's inconvenient for me jest now," he said. "I ain't got no time to spare; but it can't be helped." Harpooning with his fork a slice of bread, he disposed of it in two excursions, and then further illumined the necessities of the case with, "Lemuel's a kind of relative, ye know, an' 'twouldn't do—'twouldn't be showing the proper respect for us not to go."

His wife changed the angle of the blue sugar-bowl and declared in a monotone, "I ain't a-goin'!"

"I s'pose folks can't help dying! I ain't got the time to spare, but we've got to go."

Mrs. Ruggles met this concession of helplessness in the presence of the great inevitable with the refrain now grown a trifle stronger, "I ain't a-goin'!"

"I guess if we start right arter dinner it'll be time 'nough."

"I *ain't* a-goin'!" The statement was reinforcing itself on a crescendo.

"Git my things out, Mary Ann, so's they'll be riddy for me to git right into. I'll be working up to the last minute."

"I *ain't* a-goin'!"

"Oh, I guess mebbe ye be." And Hiram gave a dry chuckle. Assured of his masculine citadel, not requiring the weapon of words to support its security, he was grinning at the snarling tussle which was going on between the black dog and the gray cat over a morsel he had thrown to them on the porch. The quiet woman perchance vented her irritation at this indifferent disposal of her remark by placing, with nervous energy, the cover on the sugar-bowl, as she ejaculated:

"Hiram Ruggles, mebbe ye don't know *why* I ain't a-goin'!"

Not even this ironic onslaught ruffled his placidity. His heavy jaw, in the function of mastication, moved up and down with unshaken regularity.

"I dunno as I do! An' I dunno as I keer, neither, long as ye're riddy to start arter dinner tomorrer."

Under this persistent stolidity his wife's patience was rapidly evaporating. Nervously her long fingers, with their knotted knuckles, were handling the dishes about her. Without rhyme or reason the bread changed places with the cookies, and the salt and pepper seemed to find no abiding haven of rest.

"Ye know I ain't got a rag to my back fit to be seen in—five years since I married ye! In all that time ye ain't bought a stitch of clothing for me——"

"Wal, that only proves, Mary Ann, that ye're economical. An' ye allers look nice. I don't believe in women's putting all on their backs!"

"P'raps ye think cloth has the staying qualities of them everlastings!" she exclaimed sarcastically.

His equanimity evidently was akin to that abiding flower of her comparison, for he had a solution ready for the possible frailty of materials.

"Hain't I told ye agin and agin that ye was welcome to all them clothes of Jennie's? Jest like new they be, too. She never hurt 'em none. Ye rec'lect, don't ye, my fust wife didn't live much more'n a year arter we married. Most of that time she was abed. She wa'n't like ye, Mary Ann. I guess ye ain't ben in bed a day all that time."

As he gave this flattering testimony to the present Mrs. Ruggles's wearing qualities, his eyes, counting-machines of the values of crops, from their narrow openings tried to flash a complimentary gleam.

"Ye know," he wandered on, "an ailing wife ain't no real helpmeet to a man. Jen cost me consid'ble for med'cine. By gum, I jest bet she used five dollars' wuth of that jimcrack compound for consumption, an' it didn't do no good. Jen had to go, an' all that money was jest wasted. No," he contentedly went on, "Jen wa'n't like ye!"

To the large, angular frame of the successor of the helpless Jennie he gave the same glance of calculation with which he would have studied the merits of a plow-horse.

"But, Mary Ann, don't ye let no false scruples 'fere with yer wearing Jen's things. P'raps they be middlin' fine. Her old aunt, mebbe, was pretty extravagant an' foolish in fitting her out," with a generous wave of his horny hand, "but nothin's too good for ye. So make yerself to hum with 'em all."

"Mebbe ye calc'late I've notions of riding in a circus. Jen wasn't only 'bout a foot shorter than I be!"

Her tone was potentially quiet, and not recognizing the calm before the cyclone, and inwardly chuckling over this amicable adjustment of affairs, he responded humorously:

"I guess ye'd make 'bout as good figure as any of 'em! But piece 'em down, piece 'em down." He had tilted himself back in his chair, but suddenly

by the concentrated bitterness of Mrs. Ruggles's tone, he was startled into an upright position.

"Hiram Ruggles, I wouldn't wear Jen Truecome's clothes, not if I was to go naked to the Judgment Seat! I wouldn't wear 'em if she'd ben big as me, and not a leetle baby, as she was! I wouldn't wear 'em, big nor leetle. I wouldn't wear yer first wife's things, no, not to save yer mean soul from the damnation it deserves!"

With an impetuous violence that precipitated the pottery into a jingling agitation, she rose from the table. Her tall, angular figure for the moment seemed to have dropped its patient burden of drudgery; into her eyes had leaped a light fairly scorching his meaner vision. The instinct of womanhood, perhaps never totally blotted out in the most subdued, resigned personality, was inspiring her resistance. For the time being, upon the horizon of her simple domesticities and untrimmed sordities, she loomed a powerful figure. She was lifted from the temperate zone of the commonplace to the intensity of the torrid belt of tragedy, and with the invincibility of Fate she declared:

"Hiram Ruggles, so help me God, I'll *never* stir out this yard till I git clothes o' my own!"

To reach the phlegmatic nerve-centres of this son of the soil was no fleet journey; but that her arrows at last had sped to their destination was shown in the lines about his expansive jaw, now drawn to a brutal fixity. Over his two or three lone front teeth, that stood like weather-stained sentinels, his lips firmly closed.

"And so help me Gawd," he echoed in slow deliberation, "not a penny of *mine*—not a penny goes in wanton waste for new cloth, when there's good stuff in the house. Jestice is jestice, and women's high strikes don't 'fect me none!" Attempting a smile, which resulted in a distorted grimace disclosing the yellowed tombstones within his cavernous mouth, he added: "Wear 'em—Jen's clothes—wear 'em, I say, or indulge yer fancy of 'pearing

at the Judgment Seat in the slim attire ye mention! Rec'lect, ye might ketch cold, though!"

To his harsh tones the twittering of the birds in the June boughs seemed an incongruous accompaniment, and the breath of the roses, now and then penetrating the open windows and briefly triumphing over the culinary odors of the kitchen, seemed as the waif of dreams coquetting fleetly with grim facts. It was as though the phantom of the dead girl, Jennie Truecome, like a dim cloud, were hovering over the scene trying charitably to obscure the jagged outlines. Outside, in the caressing breeze, the branches gently waved, but within the breasts of Hiram and Mary Ruggles the icy blasts of winter tore. The obstinate vows froze into silence, and the heavy, decisive jaws were a prophecy of fulfilment.

The man passed out to his life in the field, and the woman, for awhile, stood silent and immovable, and then, leaving the table, which presented an unalluring picture of greasy plates and debris of edibles, went upstairs. She steered straight for the "spare chamber," which wore an air of tame innocence. The green shade, raised a short distance at one of the small-paned windows, welcomed a ray of sunshine that sported over the brilliant greens and pinks of a patchwork quilt covering a billowy hillock, which rose from the gaily hued valley of the rag carpet. Upon a mantel above this glowing verdure a tall china vase, brave with supernatural blue leaves and bacchanalian red petals, maintained a frigid formality with the box made of variegated shells, the sole other ornament of the citadel. Amid this aggressive glare of miscellaneous coloring the quaint old blue wash-bowl and pitcher, reposing on the primitive wooden washstand, were as restful as a memory.

Of this peaceful still-life Mary Ann soon made a disorderly medley. The closet, seized with a sudden, overpowering nausea, was vomiting forth its contents. Down upon the pro-

miscuous heap of garments, boxes and nondescript articles of ancient pedigree, thus unceremoniously emitted, George Washington, without so much as a quiver of an eyelid, gazed benignantly from a summery print of Mount Vernon.

Mrs. Ruggles did not pause in her industrious efforts at liberating this receptacle until every hook and shelf stood out in unrelieved freedom against the bare white walls. She violently shoved a small brown trunk into one corner; then, with a violence that seemed to suggest a decided *forever*, she closed the door upon it. The vibration of the slam of this potent barrier resounded through the old farmhouse. A sympathetic bang communicated itself from room to room, even down the winding staircase, and extended to the kitchen, where it disturbed the shining equilibrium of a long row of milk-pans overlapping one another in friendly intimacy. With a sound of cymbals down they clattered. This tin avalanche aroused from dreams the large gray cat which was napping on the door-sill, and away he scampered across the backyard. His sudden flurry put into a flutter a colony of hens, and soon the big black dog joined in the general confusion, evidently on the *qui vive* for any excitement to break the monotony of the day.

Mrs. Ruggles, unconscious of this chain of events animating, for the moment, the nonchalant farmyard, apparently had not given the final touch to her important function. The mild, white woodwork of the door, with its chaste, artistic lines, had an appearance of placid finality accented by the heavy, black latch. But evidently it was not going to be put upon its honor, for she attempted to turn the key in the lock under the latch. That small instrument, however, either from long disuse or from sympathy with the ostracized trunk, refused to make but half its journey. Repeated efforts proved seemingly of no avail. Finally, with one foot braced

against the base of the door, and with her countenance twisted in response to the attempt, Mrs. Ruggles gave a slow, determined push—and the refractory key was conquered. With the key in her hand she made her way through the disheveled mass of things on the floor. Her careful, housewifely instinct even ignored the elevated green shade, and the sun was permitted to take wanton sips of color from the gorgeous stripes of the floor covering.

From behind the kitchen door Mrs. Ruggles took a gingham sunbonnet, and passed out into the June sunshine. The omnipresent appetite of the hens, interpreting her approach as the signal for a banquet, advanced with clucking greed; but she went sternly on to the orchard of gnarled trunks shaded by their glorious, green umbrellas.

This world of quiet was an old story to Mary Ann. She did not know that for many a weary eye which had gazed long on bricks and mortar it would have been a perfect dream of rest just to see those foliated tops outlined against the blue depths of the sky. But she was completely absorbed in the drama going on in her heart.

Her long strides soon brought her to the old rail fence which lazily meandered along at the foot of this fruit-bearing domain. Elevating her scant calico gown, she stepped over the weather-worn barrier with masculine ease. Over the field where, under sporadic trees, cows were forming unconscious groups for the artist, she trudged to the wood beyond. Following the winding path over which the heavily laden branches formed an arch so luxuriant that the curious sun found a green peephole only here and there, she walked steadily on. A streak of brown fled up a gray trunk and hid itself in the leafy shelter; a red wing gleamed for one intoxicating moment and then melted into the greens.

When she reached the edge of a stream dreaming amid mossy clumps of low willows, like the airy foam of a green sea, she paused.

Suddenly the stream awoke from its

lulling dream. Like the involuntary start of a tired sleeper, it gave a splash that sent a pair of orioles to a sumach growth on the other side. Mrs. Ruggles's long, gaunt arm dropped to her side, and the knotted fingers no longer grimly held the key of the closet of the "spare chamber." Doubtless it had already reached the bottom, in its journey downward proving an iron disappointment to some hungry fish greeting it as a savory morsel.

The ripple died on the surface, and Mrs. Ruggles turned slowly homeward.

1900

"It beats all how this door sticks! Could it be locked, I wonder? Where's the key, anyway?"

"Mebbe it's in some of them drawers."

"I'm sure I dunno why people lock doors. It looks as if they calc'lated to lodge thieves."

And Mrs. Rattler, who had fallen heir to the property of her brother, Hiram Ruggles, upon the recent decease of himself and wife, gave a dissenting sniff. From a distant State she had come to Meadowbrook, "to see to things," and now that the last duties, "done in a respectable manner," had been performed for Hiram and Mary, with an interested neighbor she was investigating her newly acquired territory.

"Like 'nough there's valuables there," said Mrs. Cram, interrogating with eager curiosity the keyhole. "That key must be found!" An exhaustive search, ignoring no possible or impossible crevice, was made for the guard of hidden treasure.

"Mary Ann was queer, anyway!" Thus Mrs. Cram vented her chagrin as she sighingly engineered her cozy plumpness down from the top of the bureau, where she had been carefully prying for the mysterious hiding-place. "I don't see no sense in cooping yerself up to hum, as she done. I actually believe she hain't stirred a foot outside this yard for—well, mebbe all of ten

or fifteen years. Never could git her to go to meetin', nor funerals. In fact, she jest seemed to cut herself off from all social life. I used to tell her she lived like one of them hermits we read of. I done my duty, too, for I used to invite her to go with him and me, but she allers said, 'I ain't a-goin'.' She never entered into no explanations; but then, ye know, Mary Ann was a silent woman. But she was a good woman, a good worker," she added, in deference to the tradition that even that uncharitable member, the tongue, must be restrained when speaking of those who have passed beyond.

"I guess mebbe a woman living with Hiram for twenty-five years 'd learn to be silent," said Mrs. Rattler. "I ain't seen nothing much o' him of late years, but——"

"Yes, I guess Hiram was middling set in his ways."

"But there, let them as are gone and have got through their troubles rest!" advised Hiram's sister, with cheery finality. "I'm going to break the lock of this pesky door!"

A persistent application of a screw-driver, a few diplomatic strokes of her skilful, strong hands, and the lock, wrenched from its guarding duty, lay in humiliation on the floor. George Washington, as on that June day, twenty years ago, still gazed with placid dignity from the wall.

"Can't git the thing open now! Sticks like death to a—" her comparison was drowned in the puffing sigh engendered by her masterful tugging. Then a determined, steady pull, and the door on its rheumatic hinges slowly opened.

"Land sakes!" cried Mrs. Cram, peering into the depths with rapt expectation. After a quick investigation she added: "There don't seem to be nothing here but dust, spiders——"

"Bare as a convict's cell," commented Mrs. Rattler.

"Smells like a vault, don't it?" gruesomely queried Mrs. Cram.

"Don't look as though it had been cleaned in a year," commented the less imaginative Mrs. Rattler,

"I'd never credit Mary Ann's being so slack!"

"Nothing here but that little trunk. Don't s'pose there's nothing in it worth anything!" declared the new possessor, with a skeptical grunt.

"No," corroborated her companion, looking round the cobweb-decorated walls of the closet. "Mary Ann, ye know, hadn't no clothes to speak of. I hain't seen her in nothing but calico—my, I dunno since when."

"Well, I guess I know it. Didn't I have to buy a black cashmere to bury her in? She told me she didn't have nothing fit to be buried in. I told her not to worry—I'd see to all that!" said Mrs. Rattler, with the comfortable sense of the heir who has paid all due respect to the situation.

"And I jest tell ye, it done me good to see her at last comfortably dressed in her coffin. She looked real nice!" encouraged Mrs. Cram. "As for myself, I always calc'late to have one nice black dress on hand. Ye don't never know when the Destroyer——"

But this moralizing was interrupted by the opening of the trunk, for Mrs. Rattler during the activity of conversation had not been idle with her hands, and they both at once centered their attention in the possibilities of the receptacle.

"Land sakes!" exclaimed Mrs. Cram, bending over eagerly to scrutinize the discovery.

"Well, I declare!" vouchsafed Mrs. Rattler. The helpless expletive accompanied an expression of countenance suggesting the inadequacy of words; and for a few petrified moments the two women stood silently gazing down into the little hair trunk. But Mrs. Rattler's energy was not of the character to remain long stunned. Soon her exploring hands were diving among the contents.

"My, ain't there no camphor 'mong them things?" queried Mrs. Cram in cautious horror as a garment literally riddled with holes by the voraciousness of moths fell apart in Mrs. Rattler's firm grasp. As the investigation went on exclamations of amazement filled

the room. Cambric undergarments, sallow and freckled with age, bits of yellowed embroidery and lace thereon telling of dainty taste, revealed themselves. Mrs. Cram's fingers, fairly tingling with curiosity, examined faithfully the surface of each relic, speculating on every button and ornament partially spared by time.

"Ain't no good to no one now!" declared the heir, viewing this downfall with rueful gaze.

"No, I never see anything like it—never in all my born days!"

"I declare, it beats me!"

"Jest look at that! Why, this was a nice black delaine dress. See, there's a piece left by mistake, I guess, by them cannibals." Mrs. Cram fingered a shred of black cloth clinging, here and there, to the skeleton of a lining.

"Well, whatever 'twas, don't make no difference now. 'Tain't good for nothing 'cept carpet rags," declared Mrs. Rattler, with grim practicality.

"Why, I jest can't understand Mary Ann's carelessness nohow, letting good clothes go to rot!" And with arms akimbo she tried to fathom the mystery before her.

"It certainly 'pears queer!"

"Queer! Such slackness ain't commendable. Woeful waste makes woeful want. No wonder she never had no clothes to her back!"

"No, I dunno as 'tis. Mebbe, though"—and Mrs. Rattler paused in the search and looked meditatively at the branches of the apple tree against the window—"there's something here we don't understand."

"Yes, I shouldn't wonder. What does it all mean?" And Mrs. Cram's glance sought Mrs. Rattler's for some explanation of the paradox. But not even the latter's shrewd sense could solve the riddle here.

"I dunno! I simply can't make it out."

"Do ye know, it 'pears almost as if the little trunk was actually buried in that empty closet," emitted Mrs. Cram in an uncanny whisper. This interpretation was introducing a new aspect

into the situation. The waste of good material and the exclusively utilitarian view were lost sight of in the sense of mystery and awe surrounding the "spare chamber."

"No, I can't make it out!" Mrs. Rattler repeated.

"It makes a body feel that sad. For all the world, now, ain't it jest like a funeral?" Mrs. Cram's mercury of sensation had reached the point of full enjoyment in her gruesome hypothesis. Her comfortable embonpoint seemed, here and there, to fall into melancholy hollows.

"Land sakes! What's this?" Mrs. Rattler unearthed an article, its shape suggesting kinship with a coal-scuttle.

"Land o' Goshen! If that ain't one of them bunnits we used to wear years ago!" cried Mrs. Cram, with her interest returned again to earth, and her hand caressingly rubbing the dark blue silk that had defied the iconoclast, time.

"My, how funny it looks!" Mrs.

Rattler smiled as she gazed on this grotesque vision from the past.

"But jest to think of burying such a handsome bunnit! Why, when I was young I had a green silk one—rec'lect it as though it was yesterday. I paid Sally Smith—she that was Sally Jones—why, I guess it was all of three dollars."

"Well, I declare, I dunno what to make of it!" And wonder again filled the room, which kept its secret with the same inviolability as the serene smile of the Father of his Country.

"And where's the key? It's jest like resurrecting a corpse, ain't it?" queried Mrs. Cram, in a sepulchral whisper.

"Yes—where's—the—key?" voiced Mrs. Rattler, with even deeper mysteriousness, as her speculative glance followed the course of a stray sunbeam wandering over the silken tissues of the antique blue bonnet. "And what a fool Mary Ann was not to wear those clothes!"



AT THE "MUSICAL MORNINGS"

THE CRITIC—That man with the big mustache is today's soloist; and the long-haired little fellow beside him at the piano is his—
THE AMATEUR—His accomplice, I suppose?



THE CHEAPER WAY

"DIDN'T they marry rather suddenly?"

"Yes; his salary was small and they could not afford a long engagement."



AS soon as you get used to a luxury it becomes a necessity.

EARLY SUMMER

PALPITANT with light and tune
 Reigns the sweet sultana, June;
 Wilding bloom afield uncloses,
 In the musky garden, roses.

Lawny vistas, blue of skies,
 Spirit pain from aching eyes;
 There is that which soothes, composes,
 In the musky garden roses.

Like a ribbon on the sward
 Curls the river oceanward;
 Bird-songs ring in greenwood closes,
 In the musky garden, Rose's.

Shades are drawn with loving care;
 In a willow rocking-chair
 Peacefully my hostess dozes.
 In the musky garden, Rose is!

One whose passion long has burned
 (Though concealed, lest it be spurned)
 Now finds courage—and proposes—
 In the musky garden roses.

EDWARD W. BARNARD.



AFFECTED THE SECOND SITTING

HOWELL—In one of your pictures you look much more cheerful than in the other.

POWELL—Well, after sitting for the first one my eye lighted on a card which read, "Terms Cash."



SO SHE THOUGHT

PENELOPE—If I sin I don't know it.

BEATRICE—Too bad. It's a pity to be deprived of so much pleasure.

LE MARDI GRAS DE TROTT

Par André Lichtenberger

VOUS savez, Jane, c'est aujourd'hui mardi gras. Et j'irai à la matinée d'enfants de Mme Le Corbeiller; et j'aurai un costume de polichinelle jaune et rouge, bien plus beau que le polichinelle de M. Aaron; et je mangerai des masses de gâteaux; et je danserai; et je boirai du punch très fort, parce que je suis un homme; et puis...

Mais Jane dit:

— Tenez-vous donc tranquille, monsieur Trott. Je ne pourrai jamais bou-tonner vos bottines.

Trott se tient coi très longtemps, trois secondes. Oh! voilà les fourmis qui reviennent; elles grimpent, elles mordillent, elles chatouillent... Pan! les petites jambes se détendent comme une paire de ressorts, à deux doigts du nez de Jane?

Jane se fâche.

— Vous allez être en retard pour le déjeuner, et il y a une dame.

Trott est poli. Il sait qu'on ne doit pas faire attendre les dames. Il fait un effort surhumain.

— Quelle dame, Jane?

— Mme de Sérigny, vous savez, la maman de la petite Suzanne, qui est morte l'année dernière.

Trott se compose un visage. Il sait qu'il faut être sérieux quand on parle de la mort. La mort, c'est quelque chose pour les grandes personnes, quelque chose de difficile. Il y a le ciel, les anges tout blancs et tout roses; les belles musiques; ça, ça n'est pas triste. Mais il y a aussi des hommes noirs, des larmes, des choses horribles. On ne bouge plus; on est couché dans une boîte, comme une grande boîte de dominos; et puis... Trott sait jouer aux dominos; pas tout à fait, mais

presque. C'est amusant, mais pas tant que d'être un polichinelle. Oh! ça!...

Un petit cheval échappé se précipite par la porte de la salle à manger. C'est Trott...

— Doucement, chéri, dit sa maman.

Il y a une dame. Elle est habillée tout en noir. De grands voiles l'enveloppent. Ses cheveux sont tout blancs. Pourtant elle n'a pas l'air vieille. Sa figure aussi est blanche. Comme elle est blanche et maigre! Trott en est interdit.

— Tu ne reconnais pas Mme de Sérigny?

Trott s'avance vers la dame et lui tend le front. Elle le chatouille en l'embrassant, parce que ses lèvres tremblent.

— Vous ne vous rappelez plus la petite Suzanne, mon petit Trott? dit une voix qui semble à Trott venir de très loin, tant elle est faible et drôle.

Si, Trott se rappelle. Elle était bien douce et bien gentille, la petite Suzanne. Mais comme elle était toujours pâle et fatiguée! Sa figure était toute blanche comme celle de sa maman, sauf sur les joues pourtant. Là, quelquefois, elle était très rouge. Elle toussait presque toujours, et cela avait l'air de lui faire si mal! Et la dernière fois qu'il l'a vue, Trott s'en souvient bien maintenant, c'était au dernier mardi gras, justement au bal d'enfants de Mme Le Corbeiller. Elle était habillée en bergère, une pauvre petite bergère qui n'aurait guère pu suivre ses moutons. On l'avait installée dans un grand fauteuil, tout empaquetée dans des châles et des fourrures. Comme Trott était en pâte provençal, on avait

dit qu'ils étaient mari et femme. Pendant tout l'après-midi, entre les danses, il venait gravement s'asseoir auprès d'elle, l'embrasser, et lui porter des bonbons qu'elle ne mangeait pas. Elle, elle souriait très joliment, elle disait merci et elle toussait. Cette année, elle ne sera plus là. Mais il y en aura d'autres. D'abord il y aura sûrement Marie; pas Marie Dollier: celle-ci, Trott ne s'en soucie pas; mais l'autre, Marie de Milly, qui a de si longs cheveux blonds; et puis Maud, et puis Yvonne, et puis Lily... Est-ce Yvonne ou Lily que Trott préfère? Oh! mais, peut-être que Solanges viendra, si elle n'est pas trop grande... C'est ça qui serait une chance!...

— Maman, est-ce que Solanges sera au bal chez Mme Le Corbeiller?

— Trott! fait maman d'un ton de reproche.

Trott rougit et baisse le nez dans son assiette. Les enfants ne doivent pas parler à table. Et puis, peut-être qu'il aurait mieux valu ne rien dire du bal devant cette dame habillée de noir...

Enfin le dessert est mangé et voici Jane qui l'appelle. Trott s'élance comme une flèche et s'abandonne à ses mains expertes.

Une demi-heure plus tard, maman sort du jardin escortée d'un splendide polichinelle. Trott ne se tient pas de joie. Il admire la bosse de son ventre et se tord le cou pour admirer celle de son dos. Il fait claquer ses petits sabots, plante son bicornes sur l'oreille, s'épanouit à contempler sa bigarrure rouge et jaune. Mme Le Corbeiller demeure tout près. On ira à pied, voici la maison. Il fait son entrée au salon. Bon! il faut dire bonjour à Mme Le Corbeiller. Ça, c'est encore un peu terrible. Quelques dames le tournent, le retournent, le tripotent. Qu'elles sont ennuyeuses! Horreur! Mme Plantain s'avance: quand Trott était petit, elle lui a une fois demandé la permission de l'embrasser, et il lui a dit: "Non, merci." Mais aujourd'hui que Trott est grand garçon, il rougit, et ce souvenir est pénible à sa correction.

Ouf! c'est fini. Trott s'esquive lestement pour se mêler au petit monde dansant. Il est tout ahuri d'abord. Il ne reconnaît personne. Tout cela passe, repasse, tourbillonne... Les masques, les costumes, le bruit, les lumières au milieu de l'après-midi... Trott se sent vraiment gêné. Il n'aperçoit aucune de ses amies. Ah! enfin, voilà Marie Dollier... Trott ne s'en soucie guère.

Quel malheur! Marie de Milly et Lily sont enrhumées; Yvonne et Maud étaient invitées ailleurs et n'ont pas pu venir. Le visage de Trott s'assombrit.

Heureusement, voilà Solanges! c'est ça qui est une chance! Elle est en marquise, avec des cheveux poudrés et une jupe qui bouffe. Trott, tout joyeux, court à elle. Mais elle l'accueille par un éclat de rire:

— Oh! mon pauvre Trott, que tu es laid!

Trott est horriblement humilié mais il fait bonne contenance et lui demande de danser avec lui. Mais elle répond d'un ton de protection:

— Non, mon chéri, tu es trop petit; et puis, tu comprends, tes bosses me gêneraient.

Et elle s'éloigne en riant, fièrement appuyée au bras d'un grand toréador de douze ans.

Alors Trott éprouve les affres de la jalousie et la haine de la cruauté des femmes. Toute sa bonne humeur est partie. Il y a bien d'autres petites filles, mais il ne les connaît pas, sauf Alice Prébins, avec qui il est brouillé, et Laure Lanney, qui est trop petite. Il se sent tout triste et tout seul et va se cacher dans un coin.

Il regarde les autres tourner. Il regarde les mamans qui vont prendre le thé. Il entend leurs voix et des lambeaux de phrase. Sa petite maman est bien jolie. Elle cause, elle rit, elle a l'air de s'amuser beaucoup plus que son Trott. Il regarde les murs, les tableaux, les meubles. Il y a là un fauteuil... Trott détourne les yeux, il les promène dans tous les coins du salon. Ils reviennent au fauteuil. Oui, il le reconnaît avec ses drôles de bêtes sculptées et ses grands bras. C'est dans ce

fauteuil que la petite Suzanne était assise l'an dernier.

Pauvre Suzanne! maintenant elle dort toute seule là-bas, dans le petit cimetière, près de la mer, qui lui chante ses terribles chansons. Pauvre Suzanne! Trott sait bien où elle est. Une fois, sur la route de la falaise, en passant près de la grille du cimetière, Jane, sans que maman le sache, lui a montré une croix blanche: "C'est la tombe de Suzanne." La tombe! A ce mot de tombe, si lourd, si grave, un frisson parcourt le petit cœur de Trott. Pauvre Suzanne!

On verse le thé. Les mamans rient, crient, s'embrassent, s'agitent... Des phrases lui arrivent. Et quoiqu'il n'ait pas entendu de nom, tout de même, tout de suite, il a compris de qui l'on parle. C'est la voix de sa petite maman:

— Pauvre femme! pour la sortir de ses idées, je lui ai demandé de déjeuner avec moi ce matin. Ce n'est plus qu'une ombre. Croiriez-vous que, depuis qu'elle peut se lever, elle passe tous ses après-midi sur la tombe de sa petite fille?

Toutes les dames poussent des gémissements pendant quelques secondes. Puis elles se remettent à grignoter des bonbons. Et maman est de nouveau très gaie. Elle a l'air d'avoir tout à fait oublié ce qu'elle vient de dire.

Trott est consterné. Ah! cette fois c'est un vrai remords! Il voudrait pleurer et demander pardon. Il se souvient, oh! avec une honte cruelle, comme il a été bruyant, égoïste, insouciant, à ce déjeuner où la maman de Suzanne le regardait avec des yeux si tendres! Trott voudrait se cacher pour ne plus se voir lui-même. Qu'a-t-elle dû penser de lui, qu'a-t-elle dû penser?

Oh! il aurait dû dire quelque chose de gentil, l'embrasser, la consoler! Et il n'a rien dit, rien fait, rien, rien. Trott se déteste, il se tord les mains, il voudrait se battre. Oh! cher petit bon Dieu, pourquoi avez-vous permis à votre pauvre Trott d'être si horriblement méchant? Pourquoi n'est-il

pas plutôt mort comme la petite Suzanne?...

Il y a eu un craquement de petits sabots sur le parquet. Une porte s'est doucement fermée. Au milieu de la musique, de la danse, des cris, des rires, du goûter, personne n'a rien vu. Mais le fauteuil où tout à l'heure Trott était niché est vide.

Le soleil s'est caché. La nuit commence à descendre. Une petite pluie froide, vilaine, pénétrante, s'est mise à tomber. De temps en temps les rafales d'un vent sinistre la lancent lamentablement aux vitres des maisons et aux visages des rares passants qui se retournent stupéfaits pour suivre des yeux quelque chose de rouge et jaune qui trotte dans la boue, clopin-clopant. C'est un pauvre petit polichinelle bien bouleversé, bien malheureux. Il est tout crotté, tout transi; il a perdu un de ses sabots; un coup de vent lui a pris son chapeau; il est tombé dans une flaque d'eau, et s'est relevé trempé et tout sali. Les cailloux font mal à ses pieds déchaussés, et le chemin est bien long. Mais Trott court toujours.

Voici la grille de l'entrée. Il la traverse très vite pour que le gardien ne l'arrête pas au passage. Le petit polichinelle court à travers les tombes dont les grandes croix le regardent étonnées. Brusquement il s'arrête. A quelques pas, devant la croix que Jane lui a montrée, est agenouillée la dame en noir qui, ce matin, a déjeuné chez maman. Elle est là malgré le vent, la pluie, et la nuit qui s'étend. Comment l'aborder? Trott n'a pas pensé à cela. Il reste immobile, puis fait deux pas. Une ronce lui déchire le pied. Il pousse un petit cri. La dame se retourne et le regarde avec stupeur.

— Mon petit Trott, que faites-vous là?...

Trott claque les dents de froid, d'émotion, de frayeur, de remords... Oh! il ne peut pas lui expliquer.

— Madame, je voulais...

Il ne sait pas finir la phrase, mais il tend les bras et la regarde. Est-ce qu'elle ne comprendra pas?

Oh! la dame comprend! Elle est une maman, une maman qui a perdu son enfant. Elle saisit dans ses bras le pauvre Trott et le presse désespérément contre son cœur, comme si quelque chose de la petite morte venait de ressusciter pour elle...

Et si quelqu'un avait passé à ce moment sur la route des falaises, il aurait vu un bien singulier spectacle: une dame en grand deuil et un petit polichinelle crotté se tenant embrassés et sanglotant devant la tombe de la petite Suzanne.



BALLADE OF LOST ROMANCE

WINDS that came with a breath of June,
 Clover-scented and wet with dew;
 Waters that murmured in liquid croon,
 Singing of youth and of hope to you;
 Wistful eyes that as magnets drew,
 How you treasured their long-lashed glance!
 Tang of rosemary, hint of rue—
 These are the idols of lost romance.

Vagrant chords of a random tune
 Like to the lilts your boyhood knew,
 Vague as the scent of the roses strewn,
 Sad as the memories folly slew,
 What is their mystery, what the clue,
 Old-time ballad or country dance?
 She that you loved was false or true—
 These are the idols of lost romance.

Days that pulsed with the fire of June,
 Skies far distant and darkly blue;
 Twilight following all too soon
 Webs of dusk where the night-hawks flew;
 Lips that fast to your own lips grew,
 Vows forgotten or Fate's mischance,
 Tears and passion and fond adieu—
 These are the idols of lost romance.

ENVOY

Prince, when the dead years rise in view
 Our hearts awaken from Time's long trance;
 And echoes follow and dreams pursue—
 These are the idols of lost romance.

ERNEST MCGAFFEY.

THE MOUTHS OF BABES

By Anne O'Hagan

MRS. CLENDENNIN and her daughter Romola had been left alone together for the few minutes traditionally allotted to the expression of the final maternal emotions. Mrs. Clendennin was embarrassed by the opportunities of the situation. She had regarded herself as Romola's intellectual and spiritual inferior for so long that she could not cast aside the restraint and diffidence engendered by such a feeling and speak with the fluent sentiment which seemed appropriate to the moment. To be sure, her lovely, unworn face lighted as she looked at her tall daughter and her eyes grew misty. But she only said:

"No one hangs a skirt as Gottschalk does. I'm so glad that you decided to have him, after all, Romola. That frock is perfect."

Mrs. Ira Wigglesworth disdained a glance toward the pier-glass in which were reflected the perfection of her costume and the serious dignity of her young good looks. She surveyed her mother dubiously, as though she hesitated before some plunge, and though she spoke of Gottschalk's handiwork, it was with a remote voice.

"It does very well," she said, "though I am still in doubt about the conditions in his work-rooms. When I come back——"

"Ah, yes!" Mrs. Clendennin murmured hastily, avoiding the serious discussion which Romola's words presaged. "And are you still determined not to tell us where you are going? Isn't it rather—rather banal—not to?"

Young Mrs. Wigglesworth assumed an expression of lofty sentiment.

"We have deferred so entirely to the wishes of our friends concerning our wedding," she said, "that our marriage has been robbed of half its solemnity. It has been a show, scarcely a sacrament. But our honeymoon is to be our own."

Mrs. Clendennin's discreet eyelids hid a gleam of mirth too kind to be mockery.

"Doubtless you'll let us know where you are in time to prevent awkwardnesses, like unannounced deaths," she remarked pleasantly. "And I'm sorry, Romola dear, that you haven't liked your wedding." Her tone was a little wistful. "It was really very pretty and the bride was a great beauty."

She smiled with tender flattery, and young Mrs. Wigglesworth, almost convicted of ungraciousness, blushed slightly.

"I know that it was a pretty wedding, mother, as weddings go," she conceded. "It is the whole social routine that Ira and I dislike; but I dare say one must conform to a certain degree."

"I'm so old-fashioned myself that I like to think of a woman's wedding day as being her loveliest memory. I'm sorry yours can't be."

"Mother," Romola interrupted suddenly, "has yours been?"

The color ran in sudden little waves beneath Mrs. Clendennin's fine skin; her eyes were startled into an expression of wide inquiry.

"Perhaps I should not have said that," Romola proceeded, with the evident purpose of saying more; "but——"

"I was such a child when I was married," her mother broke in, with determined haste, "that any merry-making would have rejoiced me. I was only seventeen, you know, and I never had your character, my dear. I remember that the rectory looked lovely—it was June and a wonderful season for roses—" She stopped abruptly.

"Mother"—Romola was a little tense in voice and bearing as she rushed into the pause—"I want to speak to you about you and father and—and Mr. Goodspeed. You need not look surprised. I have seen for a long time—ever since I was fifteen or so—that—oh, that ours was not a happy home! I never said anything"—Romola's manner proclaimed a sense of her own high forbearance—"for I remembered my position. But now that I am a married woman—" Her mother's irrepressible smile made her flush and break off in her speech. "I dare say that sounds very silly to you, since I have not been two hours married. But both Ira and I are entering into marriage—differently. It isn't a selfish union for our own"—she struggled for a word and blushed furiously—"for the mere gratification of our selfish love for each other. It's a union of minds and purposes. Ira thinks that I can be of the greatest assistance to him in his work—I don't mean his law work, mother; you really needn't laugh—I mean his work of purifying politics. We think that we can do more for our times and our country together than alone. It was this conviction as much as our—our attraction for each other that brought about our engagement. And ever since then we have grown together; so that, although the ceremony which you and the world recognize as the binding one has been so recently performed—" She caught sight of the dimple close to the corner of her mother's mouth, and her pedantic fluency failed her.

"So that you feel quite married enough to meet me on a common ground?" suggested that lady helpfully. "Granted, my dear. Anything

is granted, my dear little goose—that you and Ira have been growing into a beatific oneness during your eight months of engagement, and that your father and I have been growing two-er and two-er for our twenty-five years of marriage! I'll admit any thing, Romola darling, if you'll only hurry. Ira will teach you something new about his nature if you keep him waiting. Oh, yes, he will; all men are on the same low plane when it comes to that question; it makes them furious."

"You are only trying to evade me," cried Romola miserably. "And I did wish so much to speak to you, not as a daughter to her mother, but as woman to woman! My father is such a wonderful man. How can you bear to neglect him for that—that commonplace idler?"

She was an almost tiresomely deliberate and conscientious young person, Romola Wigglesworth, but on rare occasions a heat stirred in her and hurried her into ill-considered utterances. She felt acutely conscious of youth and immoderation and all the unwise, hot-headed attributes she most decried, as she met her mother's level regard after this speech. Moreover, in spite of the emancipation of matrimony, she felt slightly alarmed.

"My dear Romola, as woman to woman, since you put it so, I should have nothing to say to you, except to deplore your impertinence and dismiss you for it. As a mother, to a daughter laboring under some emotional excitement, I can overlook your remarks. Your father—he is wonderful, as you say, and it has always pleased me that he has found in you some compensation for the incompatibility of our dispositions. . . . Ah, there is an important rap. It's you, Belinda!" as a maid of honor, breathless and as pink as her Empire frock, entered the room.

"Good gracious, Romola," cried the girl, "your good man is going about like a lion seeking whom he may devour because you have kept him so long. He's talking time-tables and

feminine foibles at an awful rate. Come on! Isn't her frock a duck, Mrs. Clendennin? And isn't she a dream?"

"Run along, Romola," laughed her mother, kissing her. "And when you come back tell me if Ira is unlike all other men when he's kept waiting. Yes, Belinda, she is a very good-looking bride. If she hadn't been, she would have been terribly outshone by her maids," she added, taking the young girl's arm and going toward the stairway with her.

In the wide hall below them the bridesmaids and ushers and a few intimate, late-staying guests were gathered for the passing out of Ira Wigglesworth, Second, and his bride. There was the gleam of white marble, the winy luster of rugs, the grace of green and blossoming plants. The girls' gowns fluttered, the hidden orchestra played something as glad and light as the dance of the leaves in the sunlight of the September afternoon outside. It was a very pretty scene; it had been a very pretty wedding. For a second Rose Clendennin felt argumentatively annoyed against the captious Romola, with her theories and her solemnities. Then her eyes fell upon her husband, and she colored at the memory of her daughter's lecture. He stood at the foot of the broad stairway, a suggestion of the scholar's stoop in his shoulders. Against a background of massed laurel leaves his features showed clear cut, fine, austere—rather forbidding in their power and repression. The sun through the fanlight above the door fell upon his head and brought out all the grayness of the hair at his temples. As he looked up his expression softened, lightened, grew animated with admiration and affection. He was very fond of Romola, very proud of her. Mrs. Clendennin felt a sudden hurt at the thought that he was going to miss Romola terribly!

"And how gray his hair is growing!" she said to herself, with the little habit of solicitude which years of estrangement had not overcome in her.

II

THE last of the wedding guests had departed. The clamor of leave-taking, the roll of wheels upon the driveways, the rustle of garments had all died away. The plants had been returned to the hothouses; the flowers had been gathered, as Romola had requested, and sent to the Children's Convalescent Home in the hills. The caterer's men and the servants had restored the dining-room to its wonted aspect. Mr. and Mrs. Francis Clendennin had smiled at the last farewells, accepted the last congratulations. Then, as usual, he had departed to his study on the second floor, and she had wandered into the music-room beneath.

She sat there now, alone in the late afternoon before the fire. She was tired, there was a wearing excitement about marrying off one's only daughter, even such a model daughter as Romola and to such an irreproachable and heaven-ordained man as Ira Wigglesworth, Second. Rose wrinkled her pretty nose.

"To change from Romola Clendennin into Mrs. Ira Wigglesworth!" she laughed. "She has no esthetic feeling, poor dear."

"Mr. Goodspeed," announced a voice at the door.

Rose turned. "Ask him to come in here," she said. "Oh, you have come in here! How nice of you, Warren, to come back and talk it over with me! Wasn't it a lovely wedding?"

"Lovely, Rose-of-the-World," he answered, sinking into the big chair opposite her. He was a large man, squarely built and, one realized, saved from middle-aged portliness only by much exercise. He was in riding clothes now, and held his crop as he leaned indolently back, surveying Rose with a half-proprietary admiration. She was very charming in her shimmering wedding finery, and his eyes, bold, tired, dark and lazy, told her so even before he stopped tugging at his dark mustache long enough to speak.

"Lovely weddin'," he drawled. "Lovely bride—point lace becomes the

stately Romola. But"—he accentuated his compliment by a pause and a half inclination toward her—"you know the Latin, Rose, '*filia pulchra, mater pulcherrima*,' or words to that effect."

"I have very little Latin," replied Rose, "but enough to detect so flagrant a misquotation. Will you have some tea? Then will you please ring the bell? How lazy you are, Warren!" as he attempted to reach the bell by leaning far out of the chair. "There—thank you. Now tell me why you ran away from the congratulatory hubbub so soon?"

"So that I might come back when all the others had gone—the same old reason, Rose! Also, so as to get in a ride—I had to see Walworth this afternoon, or rather a dog he has. Besides, I was hurt. It seemed to me that Romola was rather frigid in accepting my felicitations—the felicitations of an old friend who might have dandled her on his knee. What was the matter? Didn't she like my present?"

"Warren! It was much too lovely. Wherever did you pick it up? I never saw such a missal outside one of the great collections. You know, of course, that she was mad with delight. No, it's something quite different." She looked at him with laughter crowding to her eyes, curving her lips. The firelight flashing on her jeweled fingers as they busied themselves among the Sheffield and Sèvres tea things was not more sparkling. "No. Romola doesn't approve of you—of us."

"No? And did she diplomatically tell you as much?"

"She did—as woman to woman!" Rose's youthful laugh bubbled forth. She had no reputation as a wit—perhaps she knew how damning to popularity such flattering renown would be—but she occasionally revealed a touch of humorous appreciation that was delicious.

"What do you mean?" demanded Goodspeed.

Rose told him, presenting her

daughter's pomposity drolly enough and yet with a sort of tender pride.

"Gad! She's a wonder. Where did she ever acquire—forgive me, Rose—her amazing lack of tact?"

"You mean her principles? My good man, all her ancestors had them. You forget that I myself am a clergyman's daughter, and that Frank's people have been serious time out of mind! Principles! Even I have not been quite without them."

"That I know to my sorrow," he answered lightly. Then a silence fell upon them. A servant entered and put fresh logs upon the fire and went out when Mrs. Clendennin, with a motion of her supple wrist, had stayed the lighting of lights and the removal of the tea things. The panes of glass grew opaquely heliotrope; the firelight painted the walls with rose and lavender. And the woman sat, looking into the fire while the man watched her, wondering a little. Her attitude was tense, her features drawn so that for the second she looked almost her age. By and bye she turned toward him and her voice, like her look, was a new one.

"To your sorrow, Warren? That is scarcely true, is it?"

"What do you mean? Of course it is true."

She smiled at him across the firelight and shook her head gently.

"Ah, no, it isn't! Come—we are so old that we are done with vanities. Confess the truth to me. Isn't it much better to have lived all these years in comfort and the moderate respect of society than to have been outcast from your home——?"

"Why do you talk like that?" he reproved her soothingly. "The world that we live in is not a hard one. It doesn't send people to Coventry for divorce nowadays. And if you had—Ah, Rose!"—old recollections seemed to thrill in his voice, old fires to burn in his eyes, bent upon her in the gloom—"if you had run away with me as I begged, there would have been no exile. There would have been only——"

"There would have been exile," she

interrupted him. "Do you think I could have borne it to come back here—branded like that—back here, to run the risk of meeting my husband, to be denied intercourse with my child? No, there would have been exile. I'm not hard enough or not big enough, if you choose to call it that, to have faced down the world. And how you would have grown to hate me in that banishment! I should have nagged you to the murder point——"

"I should have adored you always—as I have done."

"You would have wanted your clubs and your stock farm, your busy idleness, the men you know and like. You would have grown to hate me, keeping you from them. And I should have gone about with my eyes sharp for slights, and should have imagined them where there was none, maybe. And I should have feared the end of your love, watched for it, pounced upon it—hastened it! Oh, it would have been dreadful!"

He looked at her, puzzled, but he made the relevant answer with the proper air of sullenness.

"You never loved me or you could not talk like this."

"Do you know," she replied swiftly, "I think you are right?"

He sat suddenly erect and stared at her. "Now, heaven deliver me from women!" he cried piously. "They are too much for me. You—a self-respecting young wife—allowed me to fall in love with you. You reached the state where you permitted me to speak to you, unrebuked, of an elopement. You refused to go away with me only on high maternal grounds—hearing the child cough croupily as she came in with her nurse, or something of that sort. Don't you remember that afternoon, Rose? It was——"

"Seventeen years ago." Rose dreamily supplied him with the date. "Romola was seven."

"Then," he pursued, "you send me away—do it with every appearance of exalted misery. When I return after two years, as mad about you as ever, my dear, as mad about you as

ever, you don't even try to repress your pleasure. You've changed, of course; you are not the same fiery, miserable, exuberant, frivolous, sweet, impulsive creature that you have been; you're a woman of the world, mistress of all the arts and accomplishments, mistress of yourself. And you let me come back to you—oh, as a friend, of course; but what a friendship it has been, Rose!"

"Your typical woman of the world, with her possession of all the arts and graces and her self-possession, is allowed one such friendship nowadays," she reminded him sweetly.

"Oh, so I have been merely the badge of position all these years? Women are certainly the devil! May I smoke?"

"You may."

He lit a cigarette and took an angry puff or two before he spoke again.

"Do you mind telling me what emotions you have been entertaining?" he demanded finally.

"No, I don't mind. I think that at first—when it happened—I was lonely and hurt, and I was vain, vain, vain! I wanted love and friendship, and I simply yearned for flattery. But I didn't differentiate much in those days, and I dare say that if Romola hadn't come in that afternoon with her croupy cough, I might have gone. I was so angry with Frank that I ached to make him suffer."

"And since I have come back? Have I been only the tame cat permitted a charming woman as evidence that she is still charming?"

"Ah, you know that isn't so." The caressing cadences of Rose's voice were matchless. "I have wanted a friend as much as ever, and I dare say I have had about the same greed of flattery. I have taken honest comfort in our real friendliness, and I'm afraid I've taken a wicked pride in the false appearance of conquest!"

"How about me?" He spoke roughly.

"My dear Warren, my conscience doesn't hurt me much about you. You've enjoyed the renown of our per-

petual flirtation, and it hasn't debarred you from— Oh, don't protest! Why shouldn't you have had your minor emotions—or your major ones? As for me, I know I've had a double charm for you. In the first place, I'm the woman you didn't have a chance to weary of; I denied what you thought you wanted, and for men like you that is a powerful attraction. And later it's been the comfort of an old, agreeable habit."

"Oh! So that's how you reason. I'm one of the men held by the unattainable?"

"Not by the unattainable, perhaps. That would soon seem sour grapes to you, I think. But by the unattained. And since we've grown older—tell me the truth, hasn't it been a mere pleasant habit, this one of a half-sentimental friendship? I've shown you my heart as well as I could—I'm not a psychologist like Romola. I haven't hidden its littleness and meanness from you. So tell me the truth!"

"The only truth which impresses me at this moment," he answered brutally, "is that it is easy to be irreproachable when one is heartless. The propriety of the bloodless woman—Oh, it is a beautiful thing! And I thought——"

"Don't go on while you are so angry," she advised him. Then, musingly, she continued: "Is it not strange that women can face facts so much more valiantly than men? Men are the romantic, the sentimental sex, women the practical."

He glowered at her across the dusk. Then gradually his frown passed and a smile lit up his face. One never could be angry long with Rose.

"Rose," he said, "how on earth have you managed to escape a reputation for awe-inspiring cleverness—such a neat, relentless, unimpassioned little dissector as you are!"

"Isn't that quite the cleverest thing to do?"

"Quite! You are marvelous. And Romola wanted to talk to you as woman to woman—Romola to you!" His laughter rang through the room.

"Ah, you are here!" said a voice from the doorway. "I didn't see you in the dusk. How are you, Goodspeed? Am I too late for a cup of tea, Rose?"

"Of course not," Rose assured her husband politely. "Will you ring for the lights, Frank? I can't see to make it."

She was very grateful to him for coming in. She divined his purpose well enough; he had somehow always managed to shield her from publishing her folly to the servants by prolonged twilight tête-à-têtes and the like. And beyond her appreciation of that gentle, unobtrusive protection, she was glad tonight to have the period put to her conversation with Warren Goodspeed. In her heart there were mingled mirth and the little hurt of a small vanity.

"He quite forgot," she was saying to herself, "how he swore that evening by all his gods that he would win me if we had to wait a thousand years for my maternal duties to Romola to be done. And I—I was actually afraid he had come to stir up those ashes according to his oath!" She laughed aloud.

"What's the joke?" asked Goodspeed, and Francis Clendennin looked at her inquiringly.

"Oh, a little snub that fate and time and another person have combined to give me. Cream, lemon, rum—how do you take your tea, Frank? You've given me so few chances to learn!"

"By Jove, women are funny!" reflected Goodspeed, mounting his horse a few minutes later. "How she has it in for Frank! Her voice sounded more resentful over his not coming down to tea often than over my—what did she call 'em?—minor emotions—major emotions!"

III

"I must go and change for dinner," said Rose finally. "You remember Cousin Nora and Will and Edward are coming over to help us forget that Romola is gone?"

"Don't go yet, Rose. There is plenty of time. I want to speak to you."

Rose's heart, the well-trained organ that had pumped the blood so evenly and so tranquilly through her arteries these many years past, grew muffled in its beating. It had been a long, long time since Frank had "wanted to speak to her." What tempestuous scenes she had forced upon him in the unwise days of her early marriage, when she had been in a constant turmoil of rebellion against his work, against his aversion to the gaieties she loved, against the inventions which she believed to be her rivals—her supplanters!

She waited for him to go on. The fluency with which she had controlled the conversation with Goodspeed, the directness with which she had led it to the outcome desired by her, were gone. She watched her husband. The lamp-light fell upon his austere face, his remote eyes, his graying hair. He seemed in no hurry to begin, and the pause fretted her to nervousness. Surely he was not going to take her to task for her appearance of flirtation? Years and years had passed since he had seemed to concern himself about that. Finally the silence grew unbearable.

"What is it, Frank?" She hated herself for the unexpected timidity of her tone. He brought his gaze back to her from the blackness beyond the windows. It seemed to her that there was a slight quiver of pain across the impassivity of his face.

"It isn't easy to say, Rose," he began. "But it must be said. What do you wish to do? What arrangement can we make, now that Romola has left us?"

"Arrangement?" echoed Rose stupidly.

"Yes. Of course I realize that you have borne with things as they have been all these years for our daughter's sake." How tenderly he spoke the word "daughter"—the words "our daughter"! Rose's heart in its muffled beating took an irregular measure.

"And now," he went on, "that the necessity is past, now that she has her own home, her own life, what shall we do about rearranging ours?"

"Do you mean," cried the naked woman in Rose, divested of all the garments of cultivated indifference, of bland acceptance of things as they were, "do you mean that you wish to— to separate from me?"

To save her soul, to save what had been dearer to her than her soul, her pride, she could not keep the strident note of anger, of dread, of outrage, from her voice. He gave her a surprised glance.

"I should not have put it so," he said.

"But that is what you mean?"

"My dear Rose, for years we have had no life in common. We have preserved a home for Romola. I have thought that you would welcome the chance to escape from what I fear has been a bondage to you—though you will admit that I have tried to make it an easy one."

"Do you wish," said Rose leadenly, "that we should merely separate or that we should be divorced?"

"I am trying to find out what you wish."

"Have I expressed any desire for a change?"

"Your entire existence has been a protest against what has been."

"How has it been? Have I not kept your houses, received your friends, respected your name?"

"My dear Rose, let us not exasperate each other. You found out my utter uncongeniality before we had been married a year. We lived a fearful life, you pulling one way and I another, for years, until your hatred of me and my ways grew to be indifference, and until I learned some philosophy. But we have lived a worse one since—or so I have found it. Now you have a chance to end it. You are young yet and—forgive me the personality—you are a very fascinating woman. You will perhaps wish to make up in your later years for what you missed in your early youth——"

Her face was aflame.

"You mean that I may wish to marry again?"

"I do."

"Do you imply anything in particular by that?"

Why, why was she growing so hurt, so angry, so perturbed, so like the tumultuous girl he had married? Why could she not continue to feel analytical and faintly amused as she had felt with Warren Goodspeed?

"I am neither blind, deaf nor a complete fool," he answered her last spoken question. "Your intimacy with Goodspeed has come very near to a scandal—don't misunderstand me! I know that it has been technically innocent—even more than that. Otherwise I should have ended it, of course. But"—the sternness that had been in his look and voice when he spoke of Goodspeed vanished—"I'm tired, Rose. I've been anticipating this moment and this talk ever since young Wigglesworth first came to me about Romola. I have worn my mind out in thought. I have no energy left to dress the thing becomingly, so you'll forgive blunt, ugly speaking. If you and Goodspeed are in love with each other and want to marry—it can be arranged."

"And you'll be free to invent more electric propellers and automatic signals." She spoke with a childish spitefulness and inadequacy of which she was ashamed even as she spoke. He looked about the luxurious room, at the piano which a great artist had decorated for her, at the harpsichord which a French queen had played, at one or two of the paintings on the wall—and he smiled.

"Don't quarrel with the inventions, my dear. They've added a good deal to your comfort. And if I can give you up to—to anyone—you won't grudge me my poor solace!"

Rose sat very still, spots of angry color in her cheeks, angry, wounded brightness in her eyes. No man cared for her! She was growing old, she was losing her power—she, the assured, the charming! Her old adorer, her long

admirer, had forgotten the resolves of his early ardor, had accepted with the most perfunctory resentment the position assigned him of a harmless custom. And now her husband was for repudiating her, for turning her politely over to the next bidder.

"It seems to me that you can give me up very easily," she said bitterly. And as she spoke she wondered why she felt none of the conversational ease, the ability to direct, to dissect, to play with ideas, that she had felt so pleasantly in her other talk.

"You withdrew yourself from me so long ago that it is nonsense now for you to talk of my giving you up." He spoke with slow repression, but there was an undertone of excitement in his very control. Suddenly she began to laugh hysterically.

"What is it, Rose?"

"Nothing," she half gasped, "except that it is queer not to have anyone want you! And—perhaps Romola will take me in. She disapproves of me frightfully, to be sure, and I should hate being there—there'll be endless committee meetings!"

Francis Clendennin's breath came a little hard.

"Rose," he cried, "don't trifle! Is it true—can it be true—that you don't want that freedom I offered you? Be sure, be sure, my dear! It's your chance I'm giving you. And if you don't take it—if you don't want it"—he came close to her, standing above her—"you'll have to stay on my terms—my terms. And do you know what they are?" He caught her hands and drew her to her feet, drew her toward him, her shining, fascinated eyes on his demanding, compelling ones, her lips apart, the color burning to her temples. "Do you know?" he cried.

"Oh," she cried breathlessly, thrilled and dominated by him. "Tell me, tell me! I want to stay!"

The world was blotted out for a whirling, golden instant. Then:

"Mr. and Mrs. Brainerd and Mr. Wilson," announced the automaton at the doorway.

IV

THREE days later there alighted from the up-country train at the Deer Club station Mr. and Mrs. Francis Clendennin. Radiance enfolded both of them. She looked upon the hills, splendid in early autumn colors, with wide-eyed delight.

"Frank, it hasn't changed! They've only built a new station. Isn't it heavenly of them? How many years has it been?"

"Twenty-five years and three months," he told her, with much exaltitude.

"Oh, my dear, to think that we never celebrated our silver wedding! It's dreadful. Where's the carriage?"

"I'm going inside to make some inquiries. Rose! I'm afraid I forgot to send the telegram—I was so rushed."

"What does it matter? You can telephone over, can't you?"

They opened the door of the station and entered. A young woman in an admirably tailored costume sat on a bench against the wall. Her lips were firmly compressed, her eyes fixed and brooding.

"Romola!" gasped Mrs. Clendennin.

The young woman leaped to her feet.

"Mother—father! What is it? Has anything happened?"

"How did you ever chance to come here? Where is Ira? What are you doing at the station alone?"

The look of righteous and determined wrath which had dissolved upon young Mrs. Wigglesworth's face under the shock of seeing her parents, returned. But training stood her in good stead. She answered the questions categorically.

"Ira and I came here because father had told me that you and he spent your honeymoon here. Ira, I suppose, is at the club. I am waiting for the down train to New York. I am going home."

"Explain yourself, Romola." Her father spoke gently.

"I cannot stand it! I won't!" burst forth young Mrs. Wigglesworth. "Mother, I appeal to you. We have

been married only three days—there!"—irrepressible dimples deepened the corners of Rose's mouth—"and Ira has practically deserted me. That abominable man, Mr. Enright, who organizes good government clubs in the slums or something, is at the club—resting! And the civil service man—Brownell, or whatever his hateful name is! And Ira—it's a city politics conference, that's what it is! And Ira tried to excuse himself by saying that it's an important political year, with the governorship election and all that. So I am going back home until election is over. I have left him a note telling him that when he has time to think of his wife, after the polls are closed, I will return to him."

"Frank, go and telephone to Ira," commanded Rose softly. Then she turned her eyes, humid with tenderness and pity and bright with unquenchable mirth, toward her stately young daughter.

"Don't repeat your mother's mistakes, dear child, dear daughter," she said. "Don't be a petulant little girl. Be the woman you are. Be glad with all your heart that your husband's interests are large, impersonal ones, not petty, selfish, frivolous affairs. Dear, I'm not a lecturing mama. I talk to you as woman to woman"—she gave a sudden little laugh as the words struck her ears. "Come back with us, and enter your husband's life and seek no other. Look at me, Romola. I have starved my heart these many years because I would not do that. And now, though happiness beyond my deserts has come to me—it's a barren soil it has to grow in. Oh, Romola, don't be silly, like your mother. Don't be wicked, like your mother!"

Romola looked at her with a humble and bewildered air.

"Why, mother," she said, "I didn't know—I didn't guess you cared about me or—anything—like this. I'll do whatever you say. Only," she surveyed her father, hurrying back from the station-agent's telephone, eager and ardent, like a lover, and she spoke with a certain shrewdness, "only—your

silliness and your wickedness, as you call them, don't seem to have done any irreparable harm."

Rose looked at her, her head a little on one side, with an air of delicate consideration.

"There's always the personal equation," she said softly.

"Yes," said Romola simply, unresentful of the little boast, if indeed she understood it; "and I wish you'd show me how to do my hair."



MY FAMILY

I AM a personage of note—
 Ask anyone who knows.
 I am the poetess who wrote
 "The Reading of the Rose."
 The guest of many a woman's club
 I'm fêted much abroad.
 Whate'er I do—aye, there's the rub—
 My family won't be awed!

I have a soul serene and sweet
 And feminine, though strong;
 My instinct is naïve and neat,
 And rarely leads me wrong.
 And other souls I often aid—
 They write and tell me so—
 But why this is, I am afraid
 My family ne'er will know!

My conversation sparkles with
 An effervescing wit;
 My sentences have point and pith,
 My fancies fairly flit.
 Extemporaneous wisdom flows
 In torrents from my tongue,
 And yet no admiration glows
 In those I dwell among!

Recitals at Delmonico's
 I very often give,
 And read my lines—selecting those
 That are most apt to live.
 But when with pardonable pride
 My ticket list I show,
 My family—in stage aside—
 "Will anybody go?"

Of course I know that I am great,
 And there are two or three
 Who could most confidently state
 More than is said by me.
 Abroad the lion I may be,
 At home I am the lamb;
 Will no one tell my family
 How wonderful I am?

ETHEL M. KELLEY.

TO THE RESCUE OF THE TODHUNTERS

By Roland Franklyn Andrews

ONE of the bitter recollections of my life is that I made the Harry Todhunters comfortably well-to-do. I should be rather glad on Mrs. Tod's account, because I do not believe she has ever quite forgotten my glorious martyrdom, and because she is one of two women in our delightful little brass-rolling city who know the salient points of difference between my lone hunter and a clothes-horse. But Tod has spoiled a rather promising personality by steeping it in the higher capitalistic thought, and he insists upon viewing me as one to whom he must be earnestly helpful because of past services rendered. And there was a girl. That is why I tell the story of the rise in the Todhunter fortunes.

I was on my way to a family dinner in a place which had some importance to me, and I stopped in at the club. I hadn't expected to find anyone I knew there, because in the provinces the game law protects bachelors only at a very tender age, and clubs are not permitted noticeably to mitigate that grand old Plymouth Rock saturnalia of succotash and pumpkin pie known to New England as dinner.

But Tod was there. He was reigning among the remnants of the café and singing comic songs to the ruins. At the moment of my entrance he was endeavoring to convince the waiters that he could stand on his head atop of an inverted champagne glass and chant the "Recessional." He desisted long enough to prove that my top-hat could be made to collapse like an opera hat, after which I learned from the waiters that he had been cultivating this spirit of playfulness since

early afternoon. Tod's own deposition was to the effect that he had wearied of poverty and a bitter world.

Now, this was the time when by good provincial custom Todhunter was scheduled to arrive in the bosom of his family. However, it seemed to me his present notion of *bonhomie* might possibly prove unpopular in the home circle. Therefore I gently confided him to the steward, with instructions to hold him under the cold-water faucet until his mood changed. Then I figured out that I would have just time for hurrying around to his bungalow and convincing his better seven-eighths that he was experiencing some perfectly legitimate sort of a crowded hour and couldn't possibly get home for his regular evening sustenance.

I got no further than the revelation of my identity to the maid, who has known me ever since I came to town, when Mrs. Todhunter eliminated the portières in one fell swoop and stood before me.

"John Cleves," she cried dramatically, "where is Harold Todh——?"

I put out my hands in pleading. "It's all right," I began. "Don't worry. Nothing has happened. Tod——"

"Where is Harold Todhunter?"

I adopted a tone of conciliatory confidence. "You see," I explained, "Tod has a very important business engagement——"

"I suppose," interrupted Mrs. Tod, transfixing me with a glance of scorn, "that is why he told me over the 'phone that he was going to be Queen of the May."

I sat down without waiting for the invitation.

"And that he was going back, back to Baltimore!"

"Madame," I cried desperately, "Tod can't come—he just can't."

Mrs. Tod threw upward one agonized glance which seemed to pierce the ceiling of the domicile and sweep the household regions above. Then she returned to me.

"He's at the club, isn't he?" she asked, with what she doubtless considered calmness.

"He is surrounded by it," I admitted weakly.

Mrs. Tod gave the feminine version of a groan.

I jumped up. "Don't cry," I begged.

"Aunt Eleanor is here," she cried tragically.

"If," said I, "you will only remember that an important business engagement——"

"Won't help at all, and it's a nasty little lie, anyway," snapped Mrs. Tod. "Oh, it's awful!"

"I can go and get him," I suggested obligingly.

Mrs. Tod shuddered.

"Or," I went on, "I can impersonate him over the telephone and explain that I've suddenly been called to New York—and afterward I can kick him all over town." I added this last hurriedly, because Mrs. Tod was dabbing at her eyes and I began to have strong thoughts concerning the behavior of dear Harold.

Mrs. Tod stopped dabbing suddenly. "Aunt Eleanor's never seen him," she said.

"This is an ill time for introductions," I mused.

"And he's just got to make a nice impression, because she's so dreadfully rich and we're so foolishly poor. He didn't meet her at the train, and—it's a crisis, I tell you!"

The situation seemed rather worse than I had realized. Out of affection for the Tods I also groaned.

The groan exercised a surprising effect on Mrs. Tod. Instead of echoing it she laughed. It was nervous, perhaps, but it was unmistakably a laugh.

"Now, listen to me, Jack Cleves," she rattled. "I've got an idea. You've got to help. Aunt Eleanor's poor dear old eyes are so bad she can't see anything without her spectacles. She's almost blind. I'll steal her glasses, and you'll do your impersonating without any telephone. You'll be Harold through dinner and all the evening. In the morning, when she finds her spectacles, he'll be here himself."

"Wh-a-a-at!" I gasped.

Mrs. Tod clapped her hands to her head. "Oh, don't begin objecting," she wailed, "and don't stand there looking like a wild rabbit. Can't you see it's got to be done? If you're going to be conventional you might as well go back to the club. All you have to do is to carve and to be careful not to be too polite to me. It's just a lark. Oh, please, please, please!"

"But Aunt Eleanor——" I protested.

"I tell you she can't see anything but blurs without her glasses, and your voice sounds like Harold's when he has a cold."

"Margaret, my dear," called some cracked tones from the upper floor.

Mrs. Tod's convulsive shiver conveyed the idea of utter despair. I stepped forward. Mrs. Tod is by way of being a good sort, as they said in London during the three days I was there on a Cook tour. "I'll do it," I declared.

"Coming, auntie," cried Mrs. Tod, and sped up the stairway.

I slipped out of my overcoat and hurriedly took to the telephone. My absence from the other dinner *en famille* was yet to be satisfactorily arranged. "Business," I stammered, "very important. A complicated sort of a deal that involves some friends as well as myself." Then I punched the transmitter. I wanted to go to that other dinner. I sat down to brood about it.

Mrs. Tod, back again, pale but determined, brandished a pair of thick-lensed spectacles before my eyes. "Easy as could be!" she cried. "Aunt

will be here in a minute. I'm going to bring her now."

"Do I—er—kiss her?" I asked hopelessly.

"Of course you do. Why not?"

"Dear lady," said I bravely, "for your sweet sake——"

Mrs. Tod whisked away. I threw back my shoulders and struggled to view my surroundings with a proprietary air. One always succeeds better in such situations if one can get into the atmosphere, and things were moving rapidly.

"Now, one step more, auntie." I heard Mrs. Tod's voice in the hall, and I strode forward heroically to greet my aunt.

She was a little, wizened-up, but still formidable-looking personage in ominously crackling black silk, who stood blinking feebly at me. There were pronounced trouble-hinting lines about her stern lips, and she was obviously displeased about something. Presumably it was the inexplicable loss of her spectacles. I seized her manfully in my arms and with reckless abandon, full upon her brow, I planted a resounding caress.

"My dear Aunt Eleanor!" I cried. "Welcome, my own dear Aunt Eleanor!"

"This is my Harold," announced Mrs. Tod gaily.

"I can't find my glasses," snapped the object of my salute, vigorously disengaging herself.

Blithe joviality in the face of rebuff is my usual method of procedure.

"Oh, I'm sure you don't need them," I protested, with a flourish intended to convey the idea of heartiness. "Glasses are for old people, and you and I aren't really old."

"Never lost them before," persisted Aunt Eleanor. "And you're old enough to know better."

"We can find them tomorrow when it's daylight," assured Mrs. Tod.

"Dinner is served," announced the maid.

I have never quite mastered the social geography of the Todhunters' table. They are a pleasantly whim-

sical folk who change head and foot from time to time. In my wholly excusable confused state, I was close to installing Aunt Eleanor before the carvers when Mrs. Tod interrupted. "This is auntie's seat," she warned in honeyed tones and a look of vicious indignation.

"I can't see a thing," complained our beloved aunt peevishly. "I can't even see what Harold looks like."

"Most fortunate for me," I asserted modestly. "I am not beautiful."

"No," agreed Mrs. Tod, with a promptness which, under the circumstances, seemed both unduly enthusiastic and unwise, "but he's handy to have around the house."

"My dear Mrs. Todhunter," I began, with a touch of asperity.

"Harold!" interposed Mrs. Tod, scowling blackly.

"Margaret, sweetheart," I corrected myself glibly, and rejoiced at Mrs. Tod's angry flush.

"Those glasses," said Aunt Eleanor. "They must be somewhere."

"Undoubtedly," I admitted, "but my dear wife has very probably yielded once more to her passion for putting everything carefully away, in which case you will never see them again." I considered that I was even with Mrs. Tod for her strictures concerning my appearance. "A little more of this excellent soup?" I urged.

"I can't see to eat it," snapped Aunt Eleanor unpleasantly. "How much do you pay your cook?"

"You must ask Margaret about that," I explained. "I'm really only a guest in this domestic establishment."

Mrs. Tod gave the figure, but Aunt Eleanor was not to be baffled. "You are the financial head," she decreed; "you ought to know."

I didn't seem to be helping the Todds as I should. "I devote a certain sum to dear Margaret each month," I explained. "She does splendidly with the household expenses."

So far I was strictly within the truth. I have not yet ceased my contributions of violets and such-like at the shrine of Mrs. Tod. Besides, it was a

most interesting experience to refer to her in these terms of endearment.

"Well, you pay your cook too much," declared Aunt Eleanor. "You must be prospering more than I supposed. How successful are your worldly affairs, Harold?"

Obviously this was my opportunity to redeem all mistakes and to aid the golden quest of the Todhunters. "They are not"—I hesitated carefully—"as fortunate as I could wish."

"Bad management somewhere," commented Aunt Eleanor.

"My recent investments," I went on unhappily, "are perhaps not unpromising, but—er—certainly unedemonstrative."

"There!" pealed Aunt Eleanor in vicious triumph. "I knew it! I wrote four pages to warn you against them."

I judged from Mrs. Tod's violent gymnastics that she was trying to kick my shins under the table. Her kaleidoscopic facial expressions certainly indicated displeasure. Therefore I relapsed into silence. We went along in comparative safety, despite my terror at the carving, until we arrived at the salad. By that time the lack of camaraderie was so pronounced and Mrs. Tod's aspect of woe so pitiful that I felt constrained to make another effort.

Now, the Todhunters have salad plates made in the likeness of broad green leaves full of depressions and elevations and queer little kinks in their surfaces, just as real leaves might have. With these they give you forks of twisted Russian silver, fair to look upon, but so delicate that they invariably bend and fail you at critical moments among the lettuce. Tod and I have said some rather clever sarcastic things about them. I tried again.

"I can't think of anything worse than having to spend one's life eating from these plates with these forks," I ventured lightly.

"You both professed to be wonderfully fond of them when I gave them to you," came the swift response.

I turned hurriedly to the cheese. I could not face Mrs. Todhunter's accusing eye. "Of course," I laughed merrily. "I was only joking."

"Young people have such strange ideas of humor nowadays."

"And Harold always tries so hard to be funny," added Mrs. Tod viciously.

"So it seems. I suppose it was a flash of wit that led him to miss me at the train. Perhaps the loss of my glasses is a joke."

I resigned myself to a life of polite poverty for the Todhunters.

The dessert passed without further peril. "Let's all go into the den," I suggested. "We'll have our coffee there, and I'd like my after-dinner smoke."

"Margaret," thundered Aunt Eleanor, "you told me he never used tobacco."

Mrs. Tod seemed close to collapse. I put my hand to my pocket and bitterly smashed my cigar. "Another of my little jokes," I faltered.

Back in the sitting-room we floundered for an unending age in family history. I know more or less about both sides of the Todhunters, and I was acutely discreet. Cold perspiration beaded my brow and neck as we maltreated a mighty line of grandfathers, uncles, cousins once removed and other brilliant subjects for home-circle conversation. But I held my own. No serious error could be charged to me. Mrs. Tod seemed encouraged. I felt better. However, the shimmering tropic sky is the natural abiding-place of the typhoon. Suddenly Aunt Eleanor wheeled upon me. "Now, Harold," she announced, "we will discuss your financial condition. Those investments——"

I gasped for air.

"Miss Addington," announced the maid at the doorway. And Miss Addington, being on terms of intimacy, appeared simultaneously with the announcement.

I have mentioned a certain engagement of mine to dine *en famille*. To my mind, Miss Addington was the princi-

pal feature of that *famille*. However, I was not glad to see her. I fell over a tabouret when I stood up. For her own part she stared at our pleasant little gathering in astonishment.

"I beg pardon, Margaret," she said very stiffly. "I didn't know——"

"My aunt, Mrs. Rossiter," fluttered Mrs. Tod, struggling to telegraph the whole complicated explanation with her eyes. "Of course——"

"I have met Mr. Cleves," admitted Miss Addington, with acid distinctness.

"Eh?" questioned Aunt Eleanor. "Now where are my glasses?"

With a wild glare Mrs. Tod charged to the rescue. "Grace dear," she cried, "you must see my new centrepiece before Norah puts it away." And by sheer force she dragged the dangerous intruder out of the room. Echoes of breathless whisperings in the hall told my sinking heart that the situation was being illuminated. But I have never believed that explanation was truly brilliant. It may have brightened the darkest features of the case, but it didn't prevent Grace Addington from marrying the doctor the next fall.

Robbed of my character, weak and sickening, I turned at bay. "This edition of Pepys's Diary," I commenced, clutching a copy of the city directory, "is——"

"How can I see without my glasses?" demanded Aunt Eleanor.

"She's gone," informed Mrs. Tod, bustling back into the room. "She had to hurry on. She's spiteful because some man she had asked to dinner didn't appear."

"Well, did she expect to find him here?" said Aunt Eleanor.

"She did not," I answered, with conviction.

"Then perhaps we shall be permitted to go on with that money question without further interruption."

"But——" said I.

"No need of 'buts' in the family."

Mrs. Tod stared helplessly. Her resources were at an end. I tried to imagine what form the onrushing crash

would assume. Most certainly all would be over if I attempted to elucidate the mysteries of Tod's financiering.

"Aunt Eleanor," I commanded, with a wave of my trembling hand, "forgive me, but you must not. I forbid it. I, for one, refuse to sit idly here any longer, realizing the real physical suffering, not to mention the annoyance, you experience in being without your glasses. I am going downtown. I am going to find an optician. I shall drag him out of his bed, if necessary. I know he will be able to supply us with some sort of spectacles to afford you at least partial relief. No, don't object. They won't fit, of course, but they will serve until your own are found. They will at least enable you to see your nephew's face. Why"—here I let my tone break into vibrant tenderness—"do you think I could consent to let you consider my own poor affairs when I know the bitter discomfort you are undergoing? Not I—not Harry Todhunter."

I backed warily toward the door. Aunt Eleanor, in spite of herself, was checked by my earnest eloquence. She sat in her chair sputtering feebly. Mrs. Tod followed me to the hall.

"This settles it," I whispered. "This, in the chaste vernacular of my long-lost Tenderloin, is 'a good get-away.' I'll find Tod and bring him home when the lights go out. Go back to her now. Good night—and thanks for a delightful evening."

Mrs. Tod fled. I threw open the door. At the same moment Tod fell in.

"Hail to zhee, 'r Alma Mater!" he chanted joyously. "I got troub—troub—troub—troubles of my own.' Say, what you doin' here with m' wife?"

This was the last straw. In wholehearted ferocity I banged Tod's rolling head against the casing, and in glorious exultation I kicked him down his own doorstep. I turned back to confront the affrighted Mrs. Tod, Aunt Eleanor close astern.

"Only a drunken man trying to break into our happy home," I ex-

plained politely; "a mere trifle after some of the things we've been through together, love."

The door closed. I lifted Tod from the lawn where he was resting and propelled him back to the club. Here I personally applied the cold-water treatment, after which we had a session of correction and reproof. At midnight I placed him, chastened and collected, in a measure, inside his front door, and trudged wearily home. My dreams were not altogether rapturous. That broken dinner engagement preyed upon my mind, and I had visions of Aunt Eleanor.

Next day, at the Hawley-Knapps'—they control the biggest rolling-mill, and by virtue of its prodigious output they lead our social life—I met Mrs. Tod, radiant and lovely.

"Jack Cleves," she murmured confidentially, "you are a brick."

"If you will kindly impress that fact upon the Addingtons—" I suggested.

"It has all come out splendid. Aunt Eleanor is perfectly sweet. She hasn't suspected a thing."

"I am delighted."

"And she is going to do ever so many things for us. She thinks Harold was perfectly splendid because he—you—insisted on making her comfortable when she was willing to give the time to a business talk."

"Believe me," I protested, "I suffered with her every moment."

"And that isn't the best of it. Harold isn't going to drink a single thing away from his own table for a year."

"I'm not surprised," said I. I remembered the kicking.

We were silent for a moment. Then said Mrs. Tod softly: "You're a good friend, Jack Cleves."

All of which made me feel warmly chivalric and quite content with myself. But afterward Tod became a person of consequence, and Grace Addington married the doctor.



LE RECIF DE CORAIL

LE soleil sous la mer, mystérieuse aurore,
Eclaire la forêt des coraux Abyssins
Qui mêle, aux profondeurs de ses tièdes bassins,
La bête épanouie et la vivante flore.

Et tout ce que le sel ou l'iode colore,
Mousse, algue chevelue, anémones, oursins,
Couvre de pourpre sombre, en somptueux dessins,
Le fond vermiculé du pâle madrépore.

De sa splendide écaille éteignant les émaux,
Un grand poisson navigue à travers les rameaux;
Dans l'ombre transparente indolemment il rôde;

Et, brusquement, d'un coup de sa nageoire en feu,
Il fait, par le cristal morne, immobile et bleu,
Courir un frisson d'or, de nacre et d'émeraude.

JOSÉ-MARIA DE HEREDIA.

INCIDENT TO THE SEASON

By Margarita Spalding Gerry

“**H**OW does Washington compare with Madrid?” asked Sam Gordon-Bradley fatuously, as one who cannot doubt the answer.

“It is much more beautiful,” replied Mendoza. He used the tone of saddened conviction with which he made a point of answering the inevitable query. “And yet I think one misses, a little, the dirt,” he continued judicially. “Without it all this fairness lacks a certain depth of the tone artistic. Is it not so?” He looked down at his dapper companion and awaited his verdict with not too evidently exaggerated anxiety.

Sam Gordon-Bradley smiled with eager assent.

“Possibly the time will remedy a so regrettable defect.” A smile lurked somewhere behind the delightful melancholy of the Spaniard’s eyes. “It would appear that you of the United States care more to be clean than to present to the eye a varied color scheme. It is a lack.” He sighed.

Both were in afternoon calling attire, but the big man’s gray gloves were twisted into a string in his shapely brown hands, and Bradley longed to alter the inclination of his hat.

“And who inhabits that most melancholy and colorless of mansions?” asked the stranger as they passed a pretentious house on Dupont Circle.

Bradley involuntarily gave a nervous glance over his shoulder. It would be awkward for him to have his companion overheard.

“The family of Lady X,” he replied, with dignity. The fact that his interlocutor was a second secretary of lega-

tion could not keep the disapproval out of his voice. But the swarthy gentleman went on buoyantly:

“I will hope—yes, I will even believe that that most lovely lady had nothing to do with the designing of the paternal dwelling. The genius of her gowning would lead one to think so much.”

Bradley shuddered; he had once met at the Charity Ball a member of the exalted family, and irreverence hurt.

Mendoza looked about him with keen eyes. They were walking down the wide vista of Sixteenth street. The softening veil of the foliage had fallen long ago, leaving only the indestructible grace of overarching trees to recall summer beauty. But the far-reaching lines of comely homes brightened his mood with their suggestion of trim prosperity. He squared his shoulders and walked more briskly.

The streets were full of life and movement. The sunshine glanced off the trappings of the carriages—at this time in the afternoon an uninterrupted procession—in dazzling flashes, and accentuated the vivid touches of color in the costumes of the women. The Spaniard wondered that the never-ending stream, flooding the sidewalks, congesting the streets, eddying in and out of houses, was so exclusively of women. And the burden of their labor—as well as the badge of their high calling—was in card-cases, held cautiously that gloves might be immaculate. One and all, these ladies confronted their visiting-lists with determined industry and a sense of rigorous duty. Here and there a frock-coated, silk-hatted man appeared, almost overwhelmed by this torrent of the feminine, wherein the

rustle of silk linings, the insistence of high-keyed voices, the dominance of color, the breath of violets, were subtly mingled to confound him.

Here and there before a door where an awning proclaimed a more formal reception than the universal "day," the stream hurried into opposing whirls, lashed into fury by the bellowing of the megaphone as it summoned the carriages of the departing.

Mendoza looked about him rather helplessly.

"But do all these have to do this, too, even as I?" he demanded.

Gordon-Bradley looked puzzled. "Have to do what?" he asked.

"March in this procession of the condemned to ennui——"

Gordon-Bradley stared at him blankly.

"It is assuredly not to be explained otherwise," went on the Spaniard. "No one could submit himself to it from a desire for happiness. It is yet early and one asks me why I have been in and out of thirteen strange houses this afternoon—thirteen houses where, in each, the same ladies—to my vision—ornamented with many metal disks, presented themselves in a phalanx to oppose my progress; thirteen houses wherein thirteen young ladies—visibly first cousins—have questioned me, 'Are you making the rounds?' and, 'Is not Mrs. A. B. C.'s tea-table beautiful?' I am asked why I am doing this thing which is not amusing, and I reply, 'Because my so deluded country which sent me here expects that I aid to cement the bondages of friendship with the Americans, and it seems in this way it is to be done.' 'But why,' I ask, 'does the everywhere-present phalanx of similar ladies and the thirteen cousinly young ladies constitute the government?'" He paused. "And where are the men with whom I should be cementing the so lately broken alliance?" he added whimsically.

Bradley, whose tenderly nursed visiting-list occupied most of his waking hours, endeavored to assume a sympathetic air of masculine superiority.

"It is a duty one owes to society,"

he explained. "Our hostesses need to know who are to be considered in society each season. They know then where to turn for dancing men—otherwise they forget."

"Oh, they forget, do they, my friend?" Mendoza regarded the little man for a moment with a suppressed smile. "Well, well, it is a tribute to the greatness of this country that it does not yet know all its desired ones."

Gordon-Bradley bowed. "But so far as men are concerned," he said significantly, "you will find enough of them at Mrs. Delano's. All the men in society—or out of it—go to her Thursdays."

"Then, am I to suppose that the Senator Delano is to be cherished, or is it that the lady has charms not always possessed by the ladies of the great American reception phalanx?" Mendoza queried lightly.

Bradley looked wise. "You may suppose both things. But—men also go because of the young ladies who assist her."

"*Bueno!* Then I may hope for a novel salutation or another style of coiffure."

"No doubt of that." The dapper little man halted before a broad flight of stone steps. "But"—he paused meaningly—"you need not take quite as much pains in cultivating them. They're usually awfully pretty and clever—too clever, sometimes, you know; but—well—Mrs. Delano rather makes a point of taking up girls who wouldn't otherwise have any footing in society—clerks' daughters, and that. They're attractive, but not quite *comme il faut* in the strictest sense. I thought I really ought to tell you of this; it may prevent complications, you know."

Mendoza was puzzled. The young ladies not *comme il faut*, and receiving with a lady in official life? And why were "clerks' daughters" beyond the pale in the United States? Was everything here not democratic? And were clerks not officers of the Administration? He had a dozen questions ready when the door opened and the opportunity to ask them had gone.

He entered, still wondering how much the little man meant by saying that the young ladies of the reception in this house were not *comme il faut*.

Five minutes afterward, having charmed—to enthusiasm—the ladies of “the great American reception phalanx,” he was murmuring to himself: “But what then? Am I some weeks here and yet look for the novel at these receptions? There is the young lady who endures to be entertained—they call her the ‘Gibson girl’—in every room there is one; and there is the little young lady with small beauty—she will talk much and make many movements, and she will always be childlike. And those gentlemen with her are from the States; in no other way could there be so much originalness in the planning of their coats. Those—how that young lady knows how to laugh!”

She was sitting at the tea-table in an adjoining room, and she was laughing at the parting diatribe against her whist-playing fired by the Chinese Minister, who shook his fat finger at her by way of emphasis. Her white hands hovered over the china and silver, restoring order, with a pretty suggestion of domestic intimacy. Her pose, the lines of her delicate gray gown, the russet lights in her hair brought out by the shaded light at her side, held Mendoza’s errant fancy.

“Some of these United States customs have value,” he reflected, as she raised smoke-gray eyes to his in response to his request for a cup of tea.

“Do you really want tea?” she queried, as skeptically as a hospitable maiden could.

“It is my favorite; more, with the pure water it is my only beverage.”

“But consider the danger!” she pleaded.

“Danger is sometimes stimulative, also tea—sometimes.”

“It is too much for you to be both brave and a philosopher. One trembles before you. Will you have this tea with cream or lemon?”

“With cream,” sighed Mendoza.

“And how much sugar?”

“I leave that with you.” His gesture placed his happiness, his destiny, in her hands.

She responded by dropping five pieces into his cup with swift prodigality.

“*A vuestra salud*,” as he raised the cup to his lips. “It would perhaps be wise,” he said after the first taste, “that you echo the wish.”

“Is it not right?” she asked anxiously.

He drank the nauseous stuff with every evidence of enjoyment.

“I thrive upon the sweets of life, señorita! ‘Sweetness and light’—is that not the word of your poet?—that describes my existence.”

The girl looked up at the tall figure with its assurance of strength, and laughed appreciatively. The attaché found the promise of her smile more than fulfilled. He liked women who could laugh; he liked the curve of her upper lip, delicate and yet rich. He liked the poise of her head with its suggestion of the brave days of powder and patches. He appropriated a chair, happily left unclaimed, and settled himself by the tea-table with a serene assurance of enjoyment.

“Are you generous, that you laugh at me?” he demanded.

“You can’t expect generosity from women, you know. Weakness is always cruel,” she said, rearranging the tea-cups.

“Ah, but not in that way should women be weak,” said Mendoza caressingly, “and not in that way should they be cruel.”

She laughed again. “I shall certainly have to mind my phrases. There is Mr. Gordon-Bradley looking for somebody.”

“It is my graceless self—I escape him.” Then, quickly, “Do you know this Mr. Bradley?”

“Oh, yes, very few esca—do not.”

“But you have met him—that is the important thing.” He arose and tapped the youth on the shoulder. “You await me?”

“Yes,” said Gordon-Bradley, turning quickly. “We must hurry if we

would make Mrs. Page's tea before six."

"I talk with this young lady," said Mendoza, indicating her—they had drawn a little aside—and his gesture was a tribute in itself. "I know not her name. I have not been presented——"

"Miss Talbot?" said Gordon-Bradley, who was not sensitive to suggestion. "She is rather handsome, isn't she? Are you ready now?"

"Will you not present me?" demanded the attaché with formality.

"Oh, there isn't time."

"Will you not present me?" repeated Mendoza blandly.

"Certainly, certainly." Bradley turned hurriedly to the lady. "I am glad to see you again, Miss Talbot. No, thank you, no tea; we are due at Mrs. Page's. May I present my friend, Señor Mendoza?—of the Spanish legation, you know. Now shall we go?"

"My friend, I beg that you will go without me. Is a man to have no rest? I am fatigued beyond endurance. Will you not present my compliments to Mrs. Page? And tell her I was—detained?" with the faintest flicker of a glance toward Miss Talbot.

Bradley stared at him incredulously. "But it's the affair of the day!"

"Truly, my absence is unavoidable. You will say for me, will you not, that it is with much grief that I do not come? And Mr. Gordon-Bradley, will——?"

But Bradley could not afford time to remonstrate; he was already at the door.

Mendoza laughed a little, then he settled himself luxuriously.

"Ah—but I find it repose to bow no more my back, and say that I find the United States charming."

"You haven't escaped. I shall ask you presently what you think of—all this," with a comprehensive wave.

"May I not be saving of my English speech and explain simply that 'all this' is United States?"

"Oh, no, it isn't! It is as new to me as to you. You see, I'm from Virginia." Evidently Miss Talbot thought that her position required no further

explanation. "I met Mrs. Delano last summer at the White Sulphur, and when she knew I was coming to Washington to visit Aunt Carter she asked me to assist her on her 'days,' and I was so glad to do it. I never would have had a chance to see things in any other way. Aunt Carter hasn't been in society since Washington became so extravagant. She says it is such bad taste—you see, we're all poor in Virginia."

"And you find this agreeable?"

"Agreeable! It's fascinating. When all your life you have known everybody in the county for eight generations—everybody you could be expected to know, I mean—every minute of this is exhilarating. Everyone that you know comes here. One of Mrs. Delano's afternoons may bring together Ammon Bey and the latest escaped missionary from Armenia, the Russian Ambassador and the Japanese Minister. And then we have to try to make them all talk!"

"I envy you your fortune," said the Spaniard gaily. "You have the game of diplomacy to play, with none of the penalties. Compare with your lot my responsibility that is over-weighty for my years, and my ennui, which is a thing difficult to support."

"Ennui! You should have come here from Virginia," said Miss Talbot solemnly.

"It is surely Virginia that I have lacked. Be pitiful to me, Miss Talbot, talk to me. Until now there has met me no young American girl of whom—while yet in Madrid—I have dreamed. In place of witticisms always the banal——"

"If you mean the girls you meet everywhere, they're too rich to be original." Miss Talbot lifted her pretty chin scornfully. "You should know some of the girls I know. There's Edith Barton; she has already had seventeen things returned from every one of the magazines. And Helen Beverly is studying medicine—that's pretty extreme, though——"

"And you?" asked Mendoza, with quite enough seriousness.

"No, I'm not a bit clever. Isn't all this interesting, the light, the color? Look at that group over there!"

"It is, then, the painting!" with the triumphant air of the discoverer. "Yes, it is a good bit of *genre*. A little too much the expected, to be sure—the Eastern background for the Oriental young lady——"

"If I could only paint the things I see, and as I feel them!" the girl burst out. "Now, that's stupid of me—but somehow I always do talk about it. I can't help it. I do wish I could study. I would give my life to it."

"But surely no, it would not be permitted. So much beauty, so much grace, it should be held to make exquisite the home of some man who could understand. Never would I—never would the men of my country—suffer so lovely a flower to give out its perfume to the unthanking, base many——"

"You will have to be here a long time," said Miss Talbot, laughing, "before you become a bit American."

"For the women with harsh voices"—Mendoza's pet detestation—"I say, yes, with rejoicing, but not for one like you. You should be cherished, surrounded with the beautiful, an adorer's fortune laid at your feet." Even as he enjoyed the aroma of his own sentiment he reflected on the proportion of debts in the fortune he, the champion of Spanish chivalry, could lay at any woman's feet, and smiled in inward appreciation of himself. His voice was none the less sweet.

"Oh, Miss Talbot!" cried Mrs. Delano, sweeping in, "won't you leave your post for a moment? Here's the whole Montana delegation coming in, and I have forgotten the names of every one of them. I'm sorry to interrupt, but—" She hurried back, the frills of her gown following her in long undulations.

"Will not the señorita be very weary?" asked Mendoza, as Miss Talbot prepared to follow her hostess. "No? Until we meet again, then—and that we shall do."

II

THE season was a month older. There had been receptions for the general, dinners for the elect, and dances for the younger set. It was the last Thursday before Lent. In another week the social spasm would be over. Anything so ephemeral, however, left no trace on the staid old quarter of the city where the Carters lived.

Early in the afternoon Mrs. Carter's delicately lined face appeared at the door of Miss Talbot's room. She looked on with eyes of wistful affection as her niece's deft fingers twisted up her mass of burnished hair, pulled, patted the soft coils until they accentuated the distinction of her head and made a frame of light and shade for the fresh beauty of her face. The older woman moved near to her as Grace put on her gown, and made pretense of assistance that she might pass her hands lovingly over the firm shoulders and rounded arms. Then Mrs. Carter hesitated a moment with a suggestion of something unsaid.

"Am I quite right, Aunt Carter?" Grace asked, as she turned from a final survey in the glass. There was a faint rose in her cheeks, and her eyes were bright with expectancy.

"I can find no fault," Mrs. Carter said fondly. There was an uneasy pause while Miss Talbot put on her hat. Then the girl laughed aloud.

"Out with it, Aunt Carter! You might as well."

"I wish you wouldn't go so much to Mrs. Delano's, dear."

"Why, I didn't dream you objected! It's so interesting to me—and—anyway, this is the last day."

The lady heaved a gentle sigh of relief. Then, "And Mr. Mendoza?" she said.

Her niece flushed. "Who has been gossiping about him?"

"Nobody has been gossiping, dear," Mrs. Carter hastened to explain. "Some man at the club told your cousin he haunted you, wherever he met you. I—don't see why he doesn't come here. No gentleman in my day ever thought

of making a young lady conspicuous abroad without presenting himself for the approval of her family."

Grace smiled a little constrainedly.

"Men had to humble themselves to aspire to the favor of this little lady, didn't they? But you know, dear, that isn't the European custom. If he did that it would be equivalent, in his own eyes, to a demand for an alliance. And—of course, there is no thought of anything—like that." She smiled again. "And I would never ask him to call, you know," she said proudly.

"And—Bob?" queried the little lady delicately.

Grace flushed, angrily this time. "Bob has no right to object," she said quickly.

Mrs. Carter stood irresolutely a moment; then she went up to her niece and kissed her.

"Very well, my dear," she said, with quiet confidence.

Mrs. Delano's last reception was the most brilliant of the year. Her old black butler bowed in and out the never-ending stream of callers with constantly increasing empressement. Miss Talbot had not one moment for thought. In all that crowd she could hardly be expected to observe the absence of one individual. She had become accustomed to the social business of an official afternoon. Mrs. Delano couldn't do without her. There was the usual horde of women, feverishly bent on getting through their calling-list before Lent—these merely required to have their entrances and exits expedited. The legislative people had to be sorted out, each one disposed of according to his own social stratum. The diplomats must be entertained. Miss Talbot had to use her French to amuse a South American youth who "was a little weary of too much English names and idioms," as he confessed to her; she was expected to put a certain naval officer—whose disgust with things mundane had become chronic—into a good humor; there was the usual delegation of constituents to be managed into a social possibility and sent

home conscious of having shone. No, there was no time for thought—and yet Grace did sometimes glance involuntarily toward the door when an unusually tall man appeared above the crowd. And as the afternoon wore on and Mendoza did not appear, a dreary undercurrent of feeling spoiled her bright enjoyment of it all. For a time the quick give-and-take, the stimulating necessity of tact, held her interest; but when the rooms began to thin, the tension relaxed and she admitted to herself that it was all very stupid.

Here and there a late caller had settled himself for the intimate parting chat with one of the many pretty girls assisting, a talk which always gathers point from the knowledge that it would have been impossible a few minutes earlier. On other Thursdays Mendoza had been the last to go. Grace felt suddenly dull and deserted. There was evidently no need of her. She found it impossible to stay. Without waiting for the general breaking up she slipped upstairs, hurried on her wraps, and in a moment was standing at the head of the carpeted flight of steps, gazing a trifle helplessly up and down the street.

Her cab had been ordered quite half an hour later. The snow, which had been falling earlier in the afternoon, giving ironical promise of sleighing, had turned, in Washington's own irritating fashion, into a melancholy drizzle, changing the crisp snow into a yellow slush and making the streets almost impassable. Miss Talbot felt quite pathetically uncared for. She was just debating whether she would re-enter the house and telephone for a cab or have one of the footmen who were waiting, huddled under the awning, call one, when a tall, broad-shouldered figure alighted from a brougham which had just driven up at full speed. It was Mendoza, looking warm and rich-hued, tiny mist-drops powdering his thick black hair and Vandyke beard. Grace felt a sudden joyous glow, a swifter marching of the blood at the sight of him. The afternoon assumed the interest it had lost. Mendoza

quicken his step as he saw her and bowed his shapely head over her hand.

"But you surely are not going? I have been detained by a wearisome happening, but I cannot support to live without my vision of you," he said.

"You are just in time to call a cab for me," smiled Miss Talbot.

Mendoza looked surprised for an unguarded fraction of a moment. A daring possibility occurred to him. He hesitated. In his own country it would be an unheard-of thing; and here, too, where, secure in unimpeachable chaperonage, there lay in wait for him that fateful, inevitable young lady with a large portion. But Miss Talbot—she was different. She was here—alone. He wanted to rescue her from this atrociously disagreeable weather and surround her with comfort of his own providing. His carriage lamps glowed warmly through the early darkness. Would it be more unpardonable to ask or to fail to do so? These Americans, with their clashing social systems, made life very difficult for a foreigner lacking inspiration. A sudden recklessness seized him.

"May I not have the honor of conducting you myself?" he asked ceremoniously.

"Why, yes, thank you; then I won't have to wait." Miss Talbot spoke with entire unconcern.

Mendoza winced at her ready acquiescence. As he helped her into the carriage with the care that one accords to a helpless invalid, in spite of himself Bradley's slighting remark came to his mind—not *comme il faut*. How much did Gordon-Bradley mean—or how little? Was this camaraderie quite—? Then his chivalry rebelled and took up arms for the girl beside him; his knowledge of human nature, too, passed judgment on the pure profile, the proud uplift of head. He was angry with himself for the passing doubt. Grace felt the increased deference of his attitude.

Outside it was inexpressibly dreary. The girl shivered as she glanced through the clouded window and nestled deeper

into her corner. Mendoza folded the robes around her with concern. He did it so deftly, so beautifully, she told herself with a sigh—Bob always fumbled. Grace was quiet, conscious of being taken care of.

His whole vital being seemed very near. The richness of his coloring, the glow of his eyes charmed her. To the Spaniard, too, this intimate seclusion appealed with unforeseen strength. Grace was very tired; she lay back among the cushions, comfortably inert. The child in this woman, who had always seemed to him so brilliant and self-reliant, stirred him. The lashes made soft shadows under her eyes, her lips were sweet in a half-smile of content. He felt it necessary to remind himself that she was not the one who could restore the fortune of the Mendozas—and also that she was an American young lady, to be respected. Her beauty aroused something in him ignored since the romance of his first youth; he felt joyous, thrilled.

Grace was conscious of a change in his attitude. She gave herself a little shake and began to make conversation.

"Did you see the work of the Japanese artists at the Corcoran? You know I told you not to miss it."

"Yes, but it was not until yesterday," he said absently.

"I am sorry; the best things had been sold."

"Yes, truly, they say the little Japs went away carrying with them much wealth. That is because they were made the—'fad' is the word, is it not?"

"Oh, Mr. Mendoza!" Grace sat up straight and indignant. "You know that isn't the reason. Their work is wonderful."

"I was much mistaken. It is quite as you say," said the Spaniard, idly watching the color rise in her face. "It is the atmosphere of the Orient they catch; here you see all in a too clear light—it is hard. Could you but see the flower country of Japan!"

"Oh, if I could!" The girl pressed her hands together and her cheeks were crimson. "I might paint if I knew something of the world. If I were only

a man!" she cried passionately. "But women are so helpless."

"But if you were a man," said Mendoza lightly, "the men of your acquaintance would not be so helpful."

"Men?—what could men do?" she said half scornfully. "In such things women must work for themselves."

"Women have been—helped." Mendoza was struggling with a desire to laugh.

"Oh, how—tell me how. I know there are ways; I'd do anything, anything!"

Mendoza started, scrutinizing her keenly. Then he shrugged his shoulders. How difficult it was to understand American women—even this one.

"I wish I could tell you, but I can only tell you what you should see. It is the color of it all, the Southern warmth that forces the art spirit everywhere. If you could see, too, the vivid blues and whites and violet shadows of Tangier as I have seen them, and the rich, subdued half-tones of old Spain, hear the music, see the flowers everywhere, feel the glorious thrill of careless life that is in the air! I am glad when I think that I shall know it again this summer——"

"You are going—and I can't! Don't talk about it! It's the dream of my life, and it's hopeless."

The Spaniard's face flushed. Back in his consciousness was the sting of Bradley's phrase. He didn't want to believe it—there was even regret in the eyes that rested on the unconscious girl—for a moment. Then he bent forward very deliberately and watched her intently as he spoke.

"That is where you should be, not in this gray America; you should live where warmth and fragrance are in the air, where love is swift and free and passionate." He paused. Grace's eyes were fixed on him in a painful fascination. She sighed wistfully, and he was carried out of himself. Prudence? In front of him was a girl's face with crimson cheeks and eyes brilliant with feeling. He leaned forward.

"Come with me; let us go into the

heart of the beauty—together!" His hand fell heavily on hers, lying helpless on the carriage rug.

With a sigh Grace awakened. She looked at the man as curiously as if she saw him for the first time. The face spoke a new language to her which she did not understand. And she was sick with physical repugnance. The flame went out of her face. Suddenly she spoke.

"Stop the carriage, please!"

There was a moment of silence. At last Mendoza saw. The Mendozas had always been gentlemen, even when not of a scrupulous morality. He must save her from a knowledge of his meaning—for once he did not count the cost. Insensibly all that was evil in his face merged into an expression of respectful adoration.

"Let the old stock of the Mendozas welcome a beautiful American bride," he pleaded—and the touch of extravagance was not unbecoming. Without giving her time to think he hurried on: "I love you, I thought not to tell you now, but it seems tonight that I must speak. Give your love to me—my beautiful Northern lily touched with flame! Then would there be for you my life's devotion, and for me—so much more. For me, your eyes to wonder at, your lips to love, yourself to cherish, close, close in the core of my heart!"

A mighty sense of relief swept over her—a relief from some terror only vaguely apprehended. She was conscious of nothing but relief. The mellow voice went on. The torrent of his words at last aroused her, and she turned to look at him. She realized the distinction of his presence. He sought her eyes, pale with anxiety; she told herself he had the perfection and delicacy of line of a fine etching. All was admirable—the figure so finely proportioned that only the grace was evident, the noble poise of the head, the clear line of the heavy eyebrows with their sharp, sensitive turn just above the bridge of the nose. Bob would seem uncouth beside him. But Bob was different—oh, yes, dear Bob was very

different. And at the thought of him another feeling stole over her, warm, comfortable. When she raised her eyes to Mendoza again they were very cold.

"May I have some hope of your love?" he was saying.

"Oh, no, Mr. Mendoza, it is impossible!" She was vaguely surprised at herself. This was not what she had imagined herself replying to him when he—spoke.

"Can you not think that there may be some hope for me?" he asked humbly. "Believe me, I could make you happy. I would know how to do it better perhaps than a man of more worth. And I would be not altogether ill to live with," he added, with a faint smile.

Grace's tender heart began to reprove her.

"Oh, Mr. Mendoza," she said, "please don't—you make me feel like a criminal. Indeed, I realize the honor you have done me."

Mendoza flinched. "No, no," he broke in in a low tone, "you must not say that!"

"I can't tell you how sorry I am!" She was almost in tears.

"The regret must be only for me," he said tenderly. He watched her a moment with painful anxiety. Finally he said, with deliberation:

"If I had said this to you yesterday, would you then have answered as you have done?"

The girl blushed furiously and looked away from him, but she answered softly:

"No; it would have been different then."

He was silent a long time before he asked, with an effort:

"Can you tell me why you have so changed?"

Grace looked at him with her candid eyes.

"I'm ashamed to say it—it seems so childish. Somehow this evening you were—different. I don't understand myself."

The man gave a great sigh. And then a shadow fell over his face.

"Ah," he said, "then I have indeed lost much!"

It was the girl who broke the silence. She had been staring through the rain-spattered window with dim eyes. At last she touched his arm timidly.

"This is my home," she said.

Mendoza gave the signal. The horse was pulled up with a sudden jar that threw her against him. He steadied her with distant courtesy and helped her to the ground in silence. A man was opening the gate of the little garden just in front of them. In the wet, luminous darkness Mendoza could see that he was square, burly, and—
young, oh, yes, undeniably young.

"Bob!" cried Miss Talbot. "Oh, Bob!" And her voice broke a little on the name.

"There is, then, another man!" said Mendoza to himself. And at the same moment he was filled with regret because of the awkward contretemps. The man turned and saw them. But the suspicion, the jealous rage, that the Spaniard expected to see were not there. In the gesture with which he held out both his hands to draw the girl to him, Mendoza had a vision of what he had lost—and what the other man had gained.

Mendoza, bareheaded in the chilling rain, watched them climb the steps slowly and vanish into the glow of the open door. Then he stepped into his brougham. For a long time he sat staring blankly in front of him. Still staring, he groped mechanically in his pockets for his cigarette-papers and tobacco-pouch, produced them and rolled a cigarette with infinite pains. Only when the first few puffs had filled the carriage with the fragrance he loved did his face relax. Then he said bitterly to something within himself:

"She would have loved me!"

He smiled very gently at the dream which seemed to stretch before his half-closed eyes.

"It would have been something to work for," he nodded to the fancy.

A tapping of many fingers on the window-panes aroused him, and he

looked out. The rain had changed to sleet, which whipped the air in long, slanting lines made luminous by the street lights. A queer smile tugged at the corners of Mendoza's mouth.

"How beautiful is this pure sentiment in me of many debts! I kneel in contrition before the spirits of the Mendozas." He smoked a few moments in silence. "I surprised myself much more than the lady," he thought. "American young ladies, they say, receive many offers of marriage"—a gleam of humor shot across his face—"but this one had more reason to be surprised than she knew."

His mood darkened again, and he sat frowning at the point of his cigarette with somber eyes. The carriage drew up to the curb in front of his hotel. As he got out he tossed the half-burned cigarette away.

"Where, I demand of myself, would have been found the means to support the existence I so generously laid at her incomparable feet? Mendoza, thou wert protected by the genius of gamblers! And I fear—yes, it is true—I am late for that dinner with the aunt of Miss Dearborn. Alas, that it is to-night that I must meet the rich Miss Dearborn!"



THE SOUTH WIND

HERALD of blissful summertide come I;
I wander by,
Singing of sweetest things the June day knows—
Love and the rose.

JOHN VANCE CHENEY.



VERY DIFFERENT

"DID Miss Manywinters tell you how old she was?"
"Yes, but not how old she is."



A PARADOX

BINKS—It may sound strange, but my near relatives are also distant ones.
JINKS—Impossible!
"Not at all. They are all rich."

THE GIRL AND THE MAN

By Henry Wood

BERTHA had caught only a glint of the diamond-set fob as it dangled complacently from the waistcoat-pocket of the corpulent man. But that glint had pierced to the very core of the somnolent but inflammable passion within her. It released, as it were, a cataclysm of pent-up forces.

She was suddenly seized with a great shivering weakness. Her temples throbbed with the fierce rush of hot blood. Her heart seemed to melt away within her, leaving a cavernous, sickening void behind. Her knees trembled, her fingers grew cold and shriveled, and her head swam as though caught in some whirling, dizzying rush. And through it all, only one thought stood out clear and strong, one great, wild desire: Oh, but to feel the cool, caressing kiss of that living stone, clasped tightly within her own small, deft hands!

This thought was as a lifeline thrown out to save her, and the next instant she emerged from the engulfing, enervating flood of passionate desire as cool as an expert swimmer. She became deliberate, concentrated and calculating; perfectly self-poised. But the effort it had cost her! She was still weak within from the struggle of it as she closed up behind the man, but outwardly she was seemingly unconscious of his presence.

Fortunately the street was too crowded there for her work, and it gave her time to recover herself. But at the next corner an open field lay before her. Save for herself and the man the sidewalk was deserted. Still better, a cab was standing idly by the curb. Of course the cabman would

see her. But cabmen are to be trusted, especially if the girl is pretty—and Bertha was.

Stepping close behind the man, she gave a tremulous little "Oh!" At the same time, with an agonized gesture she clasped one dainty hand to her forehead and one over her heart. The corpulent man wheeled, just as she had known he would, and she tottered forward, collapsing limply in his arms. Encumbered as those two members at once became for him, she saw to it that her own remained free. She even saw to it that the arm next to him nestled perpendicularly over his waistcoat-pocket. With the instinct of an animal watching its prey, she anticipated to a second his first moment of confusion, when he should gaze distractedly about for help. In that brief moment her hand folded deftly over the fob. There was an all but imperceptible wrench and the watch slipped from its pocket. Her hand bent back, the glittering gold case swung like a pendulum against her wrist, her clutch loosened, and fob and all slipped into her sleeve. A wave of cool, intense satisfaction swept over her at that moment.

This essential step successfully accomplished, Bertha proceeded methodically to the next. Languidly she opened her eyes, just as the man, recovered from his sudden obsession, glanced down. The sight that met her gaze was not as comforting as the one he beheld. For he saw only a fair face resting against his arm, while Bertha beheld a policeman, indolently patrolling his beat half a block away. He had not seen her yet, but he was

approaching. It therefore became incumbent upon her to intrude on the pleasing reverie with which the sight of her face had inspired the portly man.

Simulating a little shiver of recovery, she struggled to her feet, one hand—the hand which concealed the watch and fob—clasped to her eyes as though to shut out a great dizziness. The other hand groped forward toward the cab. She had not mistaken her man. Dull-witted as corpulent men are supposed to be, he divined her suggestive move instantly. With a heavy amplitude of motion, he assisted her inside the door, where she sank gratefully upon the cushioned seat.

Screened from annoying observation, and with the self-complacent policeman still a quarter of a block away, Bertha decided that she might with propriety and safety rise to the courtesies of the occasion. Her first step was to give the man a bewitching smile.

"I can never thank you enough," she protested deprecatingly. "It was so odd. I felt a little dizzy. It frightened me so that I screamed. Did I scream loudly?" She did not wait for an answer. "Then I toppled right over. But now I am all right, thanks to your kindness," she added brightly.

"No thanks needed," assured the corpulent man heartily. "Just give me your number, miss, and I'll have you sent right home."

"Forty-ninth and Euclid," she responded, the first address which flashed into her mind. It pleased Bertha immensely that he did not insist upon accompanying her. Such situations are always awkward.

The corpulent man repeated the number and the cabman tightened his reins. Had the man been a perfectly poised gentleman, he would have raised his hat, bowed politely and retired. But he was not. He was only a corpulent man, and it embarrassed him not to know just what to do. So, like most men when embarrassed, he shifted a hand to his waistcoat-pocket. He found it empty. His face underwent a contortion of bewilderment,

succeeded by a flash of enlightenment. Although the change had been instantaneous the cabman had not failed to catch its full significance. He had no embarrassment as to how he should retire. His whip cracked across the back of his animal like the snap of a firecracker. But his ardor defeated him. In that brief lull, when the horse stood for an instant stricken motionless by surprise, the corpulent man wrenched open the door. As the horse at last leaped to the lash, he sank puffing into the seat opposite Bertha, his hat awry and his face flushed and excited. Mechanically he began to arrange his disordered clothes. Bertha, with the remembrance that the policeman was still within hailing distance, felt no desire to hurry him. Besides, she needed time in which to formulate her role.

This she quickly did. As the cab swayed from side to side under the impetus of its speed, she recalled that the address she had given was in an aristocratic part of the city. Of necessity she could be nothing but a society woman. Fortunately, she was dressed for the part.

She waited until the man had sufficiently collected himself to look up. Then with a cold, stony glare she examined him from foot to head. Looking him squarely in the eyes, her eyebrows arched in astonishment, she began to speak. She put accents into each word that transformed them into venomous darts.

"I am greatly indebted to you," she began slowly and icily, "and I can see no reason why the debt should be increased. I believe I told you I am quite recovered. I am certain I shall have no occasion for further assistance."

The coldness which she had instilled into her words and manner was not wasted on the man. Such effrontery left his face congealed with amazement. It took him fully a moment to thaw, and then the blood swept over his massive face.

"Indebted to me?" he blurted. "Well, I should say you are! You're

indebted to me for about one watch and fob. Now, if you want to save trouble, you'll pony them right——"

She did not let him finish. "Sir!" She was the embodiment of shocked surprise. "May I ask the occasion of this outrageous outburst—this insult?"

Her eyes were flashing and her manner grew colder every instant. But the corpulent man was now too torrid to congeal again.

"I mean just what I say," he snarled, thrusting his great red face almost into hers. His manner might easily have cowed a man.

"But I fail utterly to grasp what that meaning might be." She was showing a tinge now of injured innocence.

The man glared at her dumfounded. It was almost past his belief. Still, he was something of a bully himself.

"See here," he exclaimed in exasperation, "don't try any of your bamboozling on me. When you tumbled into my arms back there you nipped my watch and chain. That's what I mean."

Bertha was not even injured now. She was simply groping in the dark. "Nipped? Nipped?" she murmured in a puzzled tone. "I don't understand."

It was too much for a man of such embonpoint. He rose majestically from his seat, crushing his stiff hat into the top of the cab. Bertha inwardly writhed in her attempt to remain, with this spectacle before her, a woman of good breeding. But she repressed the peal of laughter, while the man fairly thundered his denunciation at her: "I mean you stole them, that's what I mean." He sank back on the cushion, red, perspiring and exhausted.

For a moment Bertha gazed at him as wonderingly as a babe at the moon. Then, as if the awfulness of the accusation had at last pierced her understanding, she arose in the fulness of her womanly dignity and anger. The man, bully that he really was, cowered beneath her contracted eyes, her tilted head and her hissing speech.

"Sir," she exclaimed, "I have taken

the last indignity from you that I shall submit to. You have used offensive language before me. You have insulted me as no one but a coward and a brute, alone with a defenseless woman, would dare to do. I should call a policeman instantly. But I won't. You shall stay in this cab until we have reached my home. There, if you wish, you can make your charge to my husband, as any gentleman would have done in the first place."

She was leaning halfway across the cab and there was a scorn in her voice that brought beads of perspiration to the forehead of the corpulent man.

It acted on him as a sedative. He eyed the woman critically. Perhaps, after all, he had made a mistake, or had at least been too hasty. She was faultlessly gowned, and to him she had an air of good breeding. Also he had no fancy for an encounter with her husband. But the remembrance of his wrong cankered within him. He was about to speak, when the sudden grating of the wheels against the curbstone stopped him. The sight of a pretentious stone house was still further disconcerting. Still, he was not a man to be cowed entirely by appearances.

"Perhaps you would not mind accepting my arm again," he sneered, with exaggerated courtesy.

To his amazement she slipped her hand within the proffered arm. As a matter of fact, the sight of that stone house had disconcerted Bertha also. It made her feel the inadequacy of her little impersonation, should she be called upon to maintain it before more critical eyes. Then, too, that fine, passionate frenzy which had first prompted her act had now entirely died out. In fact, it had begun to flicker the instant she had felt the watch safe within her sleeve. She had stolen only from an irresistible impulse to steal. Now that the impulse was gratified she had no further desire for the watch itself.

Recovering from his surprise at Bertha's acceptance of his arm, the corpulent man could not refrain from a retaliating blow. "You're not feeling

faint again, I hope," he mockingly inquired, lifting his disengaged hand to his waistcoat-pocket suggestively.

It was too much for Bertha. The blood flushed to her face. Her woman's nature revolted at this coarse bullying. She was seized with a determination to humble him. He was so sure, so insultingly sure. She would show him yet. She smiled to herself. It was so easy; so easy, in fact, that it almost took away the zest.

The man's broad expanse of waistcoat protruded past the edge of his coat. As her hand lay on his arm, she had but to open her fingers and they touched his waistcoat-pocket, the pocket opposite the one in which the watch had first reposed. She dropped her arm slightly, the watch slipped into her hand, thence into his pocket, as with some of his own sneer she remarked: "As my husband is a gentleman, he will not feel it necessary to challenge you to a duel."

They had reached the door, where the man, with a mocking smile of officiousness, rang the bell. But Bertha failed to weaken, as he had anticipated. Instead she smiled sweetly and asked: "May I trouble you for the time?"

It was said so naturally and yet the query was so absurd that the man in his perplexity raised both hands to his waistcoat-pockets. The next instant

Bertha could have toppled him over with a finger. His face flushed red, and then redder. The perspiration started from his forehead in streams, and rolled down his huge cheeks. He blinked at Bertha helplessly.

"Well, by gad!" he at last blurted out. "Did you ever? I put my watch in the wrong pocket. Never did such a trick before in my life. And here I've been ac—ac—accus—" His face blanched and he floundered painfully. "Say," he begged piteously, "it won't be necessary for me to see your husband now, will it? It was all a blamed mistake."

Bertha was smiling down at him with the forgiving benignity of a saint.

"You were so kind and gentlemanly in assisting me on the street," she said, "that I could not think of holding you responsible for a natural mis——"

But she was not allowed to finish. At that instant the door-knob clicked from within. It acted like a pistol shot on the corpulent man. With a quick, apprehensive glance at Bertha, he wheeled and fairly flew down the steps. As the door opened Bertha caught a glimpse of him plunging frantically into the cab. Then she turned to the trim maid at the door.

"My good girl," she began patronizingly, "can you tell me if Mr. Bellamy lives here?"



A HALF LOAF BETTER THAN NO BREAD

"WHY does Puttyman look so pleased when people call his wife his 'better half'?"

"He is so grateful that they don't call her the whole thing."



REGRETS

MRS BATES—I gave a card-party last week.

MRS. COMSTOCK—I understand that most of those who were invited sent their cards.

TOPSY-TURVYS

By Calvin Johnston

I

CLARA, I am deeply chagrined in receiving this statement from your milliner to find that the price of your last hat was only fifty dollars. If economy should become necessary I will cut down the amount I spend for cigars and other foolish extravagances, but I am unwilling that my wife should be reduced to the shabby makeshift of a fifty-dollar hat. It would pain me beyond measure if I felt that you had the least hesitancy in coming to me for funds as often as you want them. Here is a small bunch of bills, which I will not take the trouble to count. Use them as you please; only, do not offend me by referring to this incident the next time I insist upon giving you money.

II

No, I don't look upon it in the light of losing her. Marriage doesn't dissolve the ties of kinship, and the fact that someone else supports her won't make her any the less our daughter. We didn't expect her to be an old maid and always stay at home. What do you suppose we've skimped and sacrificed for if it wasn't to give her the opportunity to win out on the right kind of a husband? Now, my boy, I've got an important engagement and you'll have to excuse me. I know what you would say, but there isn't any occasion for it; I'm willing to back her judgment. You are as good, if not a better, proposition than we could have reasonably expected, and we're all tickled over it. If you don't treat her right that's going to be your misfortune, for she isn't her mother's daughter for nothing. I want to catch that next car. Bless you both, and drop in again.

III

HUSBAND (*taking his morning departure*)—Have you any shopping errand for me today, dear?

WIFE—Yes, there is something I want you to attend to, the worst way, but I can't think of it, and there is your car. How provoking!

HUSBAND—I'll wait for the next one. By running a few blocks when I get to town I can reach the office on time, and the exercise will do me good. You don't know how my half-hour for luncheon drags when you fail to intrust me with some little commission. If you get careless about remembering them I will have to tie a string on your finger, so that you can think to jot them down when they occur to you during the day.

IV

HELP yourself to another piece of cake, Freddie; I always like to see you display a hearty appetite when we have company. Otherwise our guests might think we were accustomed to luxuries.

Oh, thank you! thank you, mama! but I really do not care for it. I know it is not best for me to overload my stomach and, besides, there might not be enough to go around.



AS EVERYONE KNOWS

“YOU’VE got to advertise to succeed,” said the successful one.

“Yes,” returned the other, “and you’ve got to succeed like the dickens to keep on advertising.”



HEARD ON THE VERANDA

“JACK?”

“Yes, dear.”

“Can’t you turn that cigar light down a little?”



OWED TO THE DRESSMAKER

MRS. GATES—My new dress is a poem.

MRS. YATES—I understand that poetry is rarely paid for.



“DID she take him for better or worse?”

“That depends on whether you are talking to her family or to his.”